



Antía Mato Bouzas

Kashmir as a Borderland

The Politics of Space and Belonging
across the Line of Control

Amsterdam
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Press

Kashmir as a Borderland

Asian Borderlands

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This book is dedicated to the women living in the border territories near the LoC. Sometimes we met from an uncomfortable distance, at other times we spoke to each other and I heard their stories of hard work, displacement, forced marriage, violence, imprisonment, and the loss of their sons.

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Map 0.1 Map of the Kashmir disputed territories



Introduction

This book examines the Kashmir dispute from a borderland perspective. It explores the conflict by considering the views of those affected who live on both sides of the Line of Control (LoC), especially in the less-researched territories of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK or Azad Kashmir) and Balistan. The work investigates the distinct political space that the border has created: a space that is not strictly seen as a state space nor entirely considered a non-state space. This is the space of conflict, characterized by the uncertainty regarding future political developments that permeates the lives of the inhabitants at all levels. The borderland reveals itself as an arena for competition between the different actors and groups with claims to the territory: people are dragged into the space of conflict even though they may not subscribe to the dominant ways the dispute has been defined. This analysis of the Kashmir borderland shows how the conflict is manifested in territory – specific locations with geopolitical meanings – thereby providing evidence of the discrepancies between ‘representations’ and the ‘living’. It also demonstrates how the main source of insecurity in securitization discourses emanates from the making of the postcolonial state.

Following critical approaches – mainly in the fields of political geography, political science, and international relations, with a focus on border studies – this work questions the limits of explaining the dispute as an interstate conflict or as a case of (Muslim) nationalist separatism (in its various identity explanations). These broad perspectives do not say much about local dynamics in the disputed territories or about the inhabitants’ views and trajectories. Such understandings neither elaborate on the distinctive nature of the postcolonial state as a process in the making, nor provide an account of the interrelations between the various territories, since state perspectives revolve around categories that represent the political reality within a specific territorial container. Considerations of the Kashmir dispute from a state perspective ignore the fact that the state is the main source of insecurity at the border. They also fall into what John Agnew has

defined as the 'territorial trap' of state territoriality.¹ While the border can be seen as a 'site' for examining statehood, it also becomes a producer of particular conditions for understanding that reality.² For this reason, the present work proposes to investigate the conflict by taking into account ongoing transformations in the border territories, thereby highlighting the importance of place.

The LoC has an ambivalent status as a border because, under international law, it is unsettled. What is separated by this 'line' remains unclear – two states, different peoples or 'ethnic' groups, different political cultures? Yet bordering practices have taken place since the establishment of the ceasefire line in 1949 and have created new political spaces marked by legal-political ambivalence. These spaces cannot qualify as proper state spaces because the idea of statehood has been contested from the beginning (in the case of Kashmiri nationalists); the people have not been included as equal citizens in the new polity (or the possibility of inclusion has immediately been denied, as the case of Gilgit-Baltistan in Pakistan illustrates); or, as the result of these realities, a context of uncertainty still prevails under the premise that the future of the region remains to be ascertained. A number of actors in the disputed territories, ranging from the state to nationalist groups, religious organizations, divided families, businessmen, and ordinary people, are constantly expecting that the current context might suddenly be altered. This means that the border has its own temporality.

Ongoing bordering practices take place on both sides of the LoC, including fencing, cross-LoC exchanges, and regulation of the socio-economic conditions of those living in border villages. Bordering practices do not only occur 'at the border', but also imply the transformation of the interior and thus the state's spatiality. Economic and infrastructural interventions in the Kashmir disputed territories have the intention of transforming the disputed character of the entire area into something else. The different understandings of these bordering practices reflect the present-day uncertainties of those living in these areas.³ By examining people's views regarding these interventions, it is possible to observe the postcolonial character of the state as a product of Western spatiality. This aspect is briefly introduced below and will emerge periodically throughout the book.

Of all the places I conducted fieldwork, the people who most proudly identified with a state were residents of the town of Kargil, on the Indian

1 Agnew, *Globalization*, 22.

2 Van Schendel, *Bengal Borderland*, 3-4; Parker and Adler-Nissen, 'Sovereign' border', 777-778.

3 Parker and Adler-Nissen, 'Sovereign' border', 776.

side of the LoC. This was mainly explained by the fact that, as one resident put it, 'we have got jobs, health facilities, they [the army] protect us, and India is a democracy.'⁴ However, in some border villages a few kilometres from Kargil town, people's attitudes were different. Working as porters for the Indian army – a risky activity that is not always voluntary and paid – and worrying about an imminent attack from Pakistan, the idea of being part of one state or the other was problematic for them. Apart from the fear of a confrontation, the inhabitants of one village also mentioned the risks of getting lost when taking their cattle to mountain pastures and being captured by Pakistani soldiers, as had happened to two shepherds years before.⁵ These views illustrate that definitions of what the state at the border 'is' are highly contentious, but I start with the assumption that states have borders and that the meaning of these spaces will be revealed by an analysis of the border context.

The background context of this book is the dialogue initiated between India and Pakistan in 2004 to address the 'Kashmir issue'. The process of dialogue created, at least for some, a context in which differences could be addressed peacefully, and also generated expectations through concrete initiatives such as the opening of the LoC to bus and truck services for the first time since Partition to allow for divided families to see each other and goods to be exchanged.⁶ For others, such as Kashmiri nationalist organizations (grouped around the All Parties Hurriyat Conference, commonly known as Hurriyat) and the victims of human rights violations (e.g., the Association of Parents of Disappeared People, or APDP), the dialogues did not affect much change because they ignored the political questions and the conditions of the victims. For the Indian Government, a central element of the dialogue process was to transform the conflictual character of the Valley – that is, to end militancy and the Pakistani support of militant groups, to agree to gradual demilitarization, to dialogue with separatist forces of the Hurriyat, and to provide economic incentives, among other things. This transformation was followed by a 'healing touch' policy in the state of Jammu

4 Interview with an elderly woman near Kargil, 17 July 2012. She was a farmer with some education, whose husband and son were employed in the local administration. The interview was at her home, and from the window it was possible to see the Pakistani side at a distance of a few kilometres. She explained that being in India was better because many in the village had government jobs while those in Pakistan were having a hard time. The association of state membership with being employed in the administration has been expressed in a number of interviews and conversations.

5 For a fictional account of this real case, see: M. Hussanan, 'Feet across the border'.

6 Linking the towns of Muzaffarabad (AJK) and Srinagar (Kashmir Valley), and Rawalakot (AJK) and Poonch (Jammu).

and Kashmir, as defined by the then-prime minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, which was framed to address the concerns of a population who had suffered from decades of violence and were alienated from the Indian state. However, for the Pakistani Government, which has never accepted the proposal that the LoC become an international border, the dialogue process was initially seen as an opportunity to push for territorial concessions. Since this was unacceptable to India, Pakistan later proposed, under what came to be known in political circles as the 'Musharraf's formula', the granting of greater autonomy to the divided territories, which would then be placed under the joint supervision of the states of India and Pakistan. Musharraf's idea was intended to make 'borders irrelevant' without changes to state sovereignty.⁷

In the disputed territories, however, these proposals were viewed differently. Implementing an India-Pakistan solution without considering the opinions of the nationalist and autonomist groups of the Kashmir Valley was considered problematic. The same can be said of the critical voices in Azad Kashmir, although it is difficult to understand the political opinions of people in this territory because they lack political freedom. Moreover, the opening of the LoC for exchange between both sides was limited to the connection of the Kashmir Valley with AJK; it has not been extended to the northern part of the line between Ladakh and Baltistan, where a few thousand divided families are pleading for the same treatment. While the opening of the LoC has brought some relief to separated families and businessmen, this is not relevant for nationalist forces who do not recognize the LoC and who demand a political solution.

The problem of defining the state at the border

Debates in various social science disciplines – ranging from political science to political geography and political philosophy – centre on the decreasing role of the state in the context of globalization processes and, consequently, the blurring of the division between national and international domains.⁸

7 These are the state positions, broadly speaking, but the government of Nawaz Sharif (who took office in 2014) tried to distance itself from Musharraf's plan. At the least, this is what emerges from government declarations and from the answer I received from the former Pakistani ambassador to Germany (and incumbent ambassador to India), Mr Abdul Basit, in a talk entitled 'Jammu and Kashmir Dispute: Hurdle to Peace and Prosperity in South Asia' on 27 November 2013, delivered at the German Geographical Society, Berlin. 'Musharraf's formula' was made public in the former general's memoir, Musharraf, *Line of Fire*, 303.

8 See Agnew, *Globalization*; Sassen, 'When national territory is home'.

These perspectives highlight the relational character of the concept of sovereignty as no longer being, if ever it was, contained in the state. Yet some scholars observe the state's continued relevance or adaptation through its 'rescaling' by processes of regionalization at the supra- or substate levels under changing economic dynamics that denote new ways of control, including decentralized control.⁹ While these works are very valuable, they tend to reproduce a kind of knowledge that ignores the diversity of world contexts and the experience of the postcolonial state in the Global South in particular. Their focus is on socio-economic processes, seen from one perspective – as if the Western state model and the exercise of power and authority reproduce more or less uniform, though unequal, forms of space and time.

A key question within debates about the state's role under globalization concerns the principle of national sovereignty. Stuart Elden has demonstrated the increasing inconsistency of the principle of the state's territorial integrity as the spatial extent of sovereignty by examining international interventions from the perspective of international law.¹⁰ While he shows that most of the countries where military interventions occur are only nominally sovereign, he does not explain how this relates to the history of direct or indirect colonialism (and partition) in the cases he discusses. Likewise, Wendy Brown maintains that processes of walling and erecting fences constitute reactions to the state's waning sovereignty, but she does not address the fact that most of the cases she describes (e.g. Israel/Palestine, Kashmir, Melilla) occur in postcolonial states that are preoccupied with creating their own *demos*.¹¹ The examples provided by Elden and Brown demonstrate the 'contingent' (to use Elden's terminology) character of sovereignty despite attempts at rescaling or 'rebranding' the state (through walls and fences), such as those described by Brown. However, what is left unexplored is that these processes are occurring in zones of weak security regimes and, because the state is not in full control of the territory, agents claiming to act on behalf of the state attempt to take hold of it. They do this through the exploitation of resources and the exercise of violence – that is, by creating a context of insecurity where they can dominate and conquer. This occurs for a significant period of time; this exceptional context has some degree of permanence. These zones, normally 'weak' sovereign border areas, experience the intensification of sovereign power through a number

9 Paasi, 'Resurgence of the 'Region'', 217; Paasi and Moisio, 'Beyond state-centricity'.

10 Elden, *Terror and Territory*.

11 Brown, *Walled States*, 24.

of regulations that permeate the lives of their inhabitants. Power as state power is heavily inscribed in territory, but paradoxically – as this book illustrates with regard to the Kashmir border areas – it is also inscribed in a territory that cannot be considered a proper state space.

The sovereign character of the postcolonial state, as an institution that maintains security within its borders and hence exercises control over its domestic domain, has been examined by a number of authors. David Newman has highlighted the relevance of territory in bordering processes and ‘othering’ in Israel/Palestine in the construction of the Israeli state.¹² Similarly, Sankaran Krishna has pointed out that India’s ‘cartographic anxiety’ about bringing the border areas under control and its obsession with foreign infiltration are symptoms of its postcolonial condition.¹³ Krishna’s argument, however, does not take into account the fact that the construction of the postcolonial state is also a reaction to colonialism, and the interfering and dependent relationship between the colonial power and the colonized. In this respect, the present work considers the postcolonial state as a recent process in the making and that, compared with the history and development of the European state, it has a strong external component that shapes the conditions within, as Ranabir Samaddar has rightly observed regarding the external character of peace processes in conflicts.¹⁴ The nature of the postcolonial state can be seen at the border, where processes of intervention, appropriation, and rescaling of the border areas take place.

In the Kashmir borderland the state is the main actor concerned with the maintenance of the LoC because the state’s legitimacy rests on the control within. This means that the LoC acts as a divider because there are two polities – India and Pakistan – that have sufficient instruments to enforce separation at various levels (i.e., the military, state nationalism, state socialization, and the economic reorganization of communications). Although the state is defined by and within its borders on the basis of a territory homogeneously governed by a specific law and politics, statehood is not equally distributed over the territory. Compared with state-building in Europe, where state borders were created following the successful control of territory through the incorporation and management of the social body within, as understood in Foucault’s notion of ‘governmentality’, in the postcolonial model the borders of the state tend to come first. The latter has

12 Newman, ‘Barriers or bridges?’ Also from the same author ‘Resilience of conflict’, 100–101 and 105–106; ‘Colonization as suburbanization’.

13 Krishna, ‘Cartographic anxiety’.

14 Samaddar, *Space, Territory*, 184.

different consequences than the former because the incorporation of the social body at the border does not necessarily precede any form of socialization in the state polity.¹⁵ In other words, in the postcolonial setting state incorporation does not necessarily mean integration or state socialization.

Those living in the Kashmir borderland have either rejected (those in the Kashmir Valley) or been excluded from (those in Gilgit-Baltistan) the state-making process. Even so, they have been monitored under various administrative and military regimes as if they were non-state citizens. To expose the inconsistencies and changes in the state-making process it is crucial to analyse how the Kashmir conflict is understood, lived, and perceived 'at the border' – a specific location where ideas of statehood and belonging are particularly problematic. Such an exercise can unfold what Anssi Paasi and Sami Moisio call 'mundane geographies of stateness', formations that do not necessarily coincide in shape and content with normative ones and can provide insight for the investigation of spatial transformations.¹⁶ The ways in which local populations have been kept on one side or the other of the LoC constitute important empirical material for examining statehood. For this purpose, I follow a mesolevel approach that relates the interactions of interventions from above (macroscale) in the border disputed territories of the LoC with people's perceptions and reactions to these interventions (microlevel or local scale), which highlight the role and agency of people in the discourse on borders in conflict.

What is the Kashmir dispute, territorially and spatially?

The Kashmir dispute is normally defined as a 'South Asian dispute' because it is 'contained' between India and Pakistan – two South Asian states according to area studies divisions (in this, the Chinese parts are omitted). The conflict in the Kashmir Valley, which is administered by India, is often labelled as 'Indian' rather than 'South Asian' because the main source of dissent is Kashmir's accession to India in 1947 and how India has controlled the Valley since then (by not respecting the special status of the state within the Indian Constitution). The other disputed territories – different parts of the former princely state including Jammu, Ladakh, Baltistan, and Gilgit – are 'trapped' in the cartographic map and, perhaps with the exception of AJK, the people living there feel neither Kashmiri nor part of the conflict in the Kashmir Valley. On the contrary, they feel they are suffering because

¹⁵ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 113–114.

¹⁶ Moisio and Paasi, 'Beyond state-centricity', 263.

of the continuous linkage from above (by the state and the international community) of their territories to the disputed map. Jammu is culturally and economically connected to the Punjab and the rest of India, but the northern Kashmir territories share cultural and religious traditions with various parts of Central Asia ranging from Iran to Tibet. Despite these connections Kashmir is not normally described as being part of Central Asia for a number of reasons, such as the historical links of the region with the South – the Kashmir Valley was a place for Sanskrit learning, and the southern AJK was culturally assimilated to the Punjab – and the shared colonial history.¹⁷ These relatively ‘safe’ representations do not easily stand up to scrutiny when it comes to the spatial analysis of the conflict in the various locations of the borderland.

The border territories under consideration are interconnected by their disputed condition. This condition can be explained in material interventions, understood in a broad sense – that is, the building of major infrastructure, the enforcement of specific legal-constitutional systems, the fostering of tourism in former conflict zones, the conditions under which the LoC has been opened, and so on. The disputed character can also be seen in the social relations and interactions – involving participation, acceptance, rejection, or reformulation – that are derived from the various interventions, as well as the discursive practices that revolve around these interventions.¹⁸ For example, the militarization of the Kashmir Valley in India has had an enormous impact on the lives of ordinary people for two-and-a-half decades, and an entire generation has grown up in a state of exception under draconian rules such as the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) of 1990 and the Public Safety Act (PSA), both of which restrict basic freedoms.¹⁹

For a significant period of time people in the Valley have lived in a context of constant surveillance by the security forces, intelligence agencies, and sometimes members of their own community or family. Militarization has affected mobility in various ways, including: restrictions during curfews; the

17 On this debate see Zutshi, *Kashmir's Contested Pasts*, 303–314.

18 Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, Introduction.

19 On the issue of militarization see Kazi, *Between Democracy*, Ch. 3; Kak, ‘Kashmir’s stone-pelters’. In this regard it is interesting to point out the publication of personal accounts of this period, such as the one provided by Basharat Peer, *Curfewed Night*, or the most militant portrayal of one of the leading female activists, a member of the *Muslim Khawateen-e-Markaz*, by Anjum Zamarud Habid, *Prisoner No. 100*. In the cultural scene, literary works in English such as the novel *The Collaborator* by Mirza Waheed and films in Urdu and Hindi such as *Harud* (2012) and *Haider* (2014) – the latter an adaptation of *Hamlet* for the Kashmir context – revolve around the gradual insanity of the young male protagonist set against the confusing dynamics of a context of conflict that he is no longer able to grasp.

obligation to travel at night with the car's interior lights on; a bar on entering certain places; the need to carry identification; periodic body searches; arbitrary detentions; and the once popular 'crackdowns' (search and arrest operations) of the security forces, which separated men and women and gathered the men outdoors for hours to be identified (while the women were sometimes harassed or raped by the security forces). Moreover, militarization has undermined certain aspects of privacy and intimacy, as well as matters of trust, by fostering (or forcing) collaboration between civilians and the security forces, causing important fractures in the society. As portrayed by the Indian state, militarization at the level of discourse revolves around the argument about security, in which 'militants' or 'terrorists' aided by Pakistan periodically attempt to snatch this territory from India. Yet, as Seema Kazi points out, 'militarisation in *Kashmir* is inseparable from the militarisation of the (Indian) state over Kashmir.'²⁰ This suggests that it is not only about securing borders from the enemy 'other', but militarization is an strategy functional to the changing nature of the state and its ability to maintain control of the territory.

Any research is a limited and synthesized explanation of social phenomena, and for the investigation of the spatial dimension of the Kashmir dispute, some complex aspects have been simplified in my methodological design with regard to the fieldwork and material collected. Several issues have been a matter of concern, particularly the terminology and conceptual work involved; the fieldwork conducted on a 'disputed context' in terms of access to sources and the sensitive nature of the topic; and the question of scale and its implications for the understanding of conflicts. The way I handle these issues will become clear in the following chapters.

Before going further, it is important to provide a few clarifications. First, the term 'Kashmir' can be misleading because it refers to different territorial configurations: the historic princely state of Jammu and Kashmir; the state of Jammu and Kashmir in India; the Kashmir Valley; Kashmir province; and finally an ideal territorial configuration that, in principle, does not coincide with those mentioned previously and is yet to be decided. To simplify this, I use 'Kashmir' to refer to the disputed territories between India and Pakistan that were part of the former princely state, in the sense that they were included in that political entity before Partition.²¹ When referring

²⁰ Kazi, *Between Democracy*, 68.

²¹ Kashmir also encompasses some territories in China which have been ceded by Pakistan under the 1963 border treaty and the Aksai Chin, which is claimed by India. The Aksai Chin is not permanently populated and is not usually referred to in discussions of the dispute by those

to the conflict zone in Indian Kashmir, I use 'Kashmir Valley' (including the surrounding mountains) or 'Kashmir administrative division'. For the Pakistani Kashmir areas, I employ 'Azad Kashmir' or 'AJK' to refer to the liberated areas of the present Divisions of Muzaffarabad, Poonch, and Mirpur, which were administratively part of Kashmir (in the case of Muzaffarabad) and Jammu (in the case of Poonch and Mirpur). Gilgit-Baltistan (known before 2009 as the Northern Areas) is a separate administrative entity from AJK and therefore stands for that region in the northeast; when I mention Pakistani Kashmir-related areas, it can be assumed to be included. The terms coined by Kashmiri nationalists and by India and Pakistan, such as 'Pakistan occupied Kashmir' (also known as PoK) or 'Indian-Held Kashmir' (IHK), are less known and usually involve a connotation that has limited explanatory purposes. The use of 'state of Jammu and Kashmir' to denote the disputed areas in India, for example, is no less problematic because it implies adopting the position of the Indian state. However, as my research addresses precisely the construction of the several political units after the disintegration of the princely state, it is worth considering them as they are usually referred to.

Likewise, the use of concepts such as 'region' and 'border' is not exempt from problems. Kashmir barely qualifies as a region, if 'region' is understood as either a supstate or substate entity sharing a series of commonalities – interactions, social and cultural affinities, or some sort of institutionalization – and characterized by a sense of proximity and connectivity.²² Kashmir is practically the opposite because of the prevalence of fragmentation and separation compared to cooperation and interaction. This is in part due to its geographical condition as a high mountain area, with the exception of the sizeable Kashmir Valley, which affects connectivity, but also to post-1947 political divisions and reorganizations of the various territories that have reinforced divisions among peoples. Kashmir could be considered a 'negative region', following the work of James Scott, who uses the concept to define

affected on both sides of the LoC. In the case of the Kashmir Valley, there has been a pro-Chinese sentiment among the nationalists because of, among other things, China's policy of stapled visas. Visas given to Kashmiris (and people from Arunachal Pradesh) are not sealed on Indian passports but instead stapled to a separate sheet. However, this positive view of China does not apply to Ladakhis because Aksai Chin is their border and India exercises claims to it in the context of the India-China border dispute. I do not refer to the Kashmir territories in China in the present work because they are not significant for the various claims over the dispute that are addressed here.

22 Paasi 'Resurgence of the 'Region'', 124; Keating 'Invention of regions'; Castells, *The Power of Identity*.

Zomia on the grounds of its variety.²³ While Scott underlines disconnection as a distinct factor of the Zomia region, he ends by acknowledging some significant commonalities such as 'patterns of diverse hill agriculture, dispersal and mobility, and rough egalitarianism,' alongside the relatively stateless character of these territories.²⁴ Such common patterns are absent in Kashmir.

Defining Kashmir as a region in a normative manner is problematic because historically it is no more than an artificial amalgamation of various territories, including several forms of political allegiances, over time, through rough conquests and treaties resulting from colonial interests.²⁵ This notwithstanding, Kashmir can be regarded as a region (a negative and open one) – a region in the making, whose process of becoming was dramatically affected by the conflict in 1947-1949. The reference to Kashmir as a region in the present work bows to the question of the uncertain political status of these territories and the impossibility for those living there to ascertain their political future. Kashmir qualifies as a region based on its condition as an area that is fragmented yet connected, surrounded by various political boundaries – international, regional, administrative – that impact one another and have enormous implications for people's lives.

By 'border' I do not mean a static element that is invariable over time, but an institution resulting from social processes that shape political space, which is at the same time influenced by other institutions.²⁶ The border emerged out of the state-making process after Partition and the appropriation of the Kashmir territories of the former princely state by the polities of India and Pakistan. The border is the context in which processes of exclusion, disconnection, and connection take place and shape the construction of spaces that ultimately lead to its own transformation. Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson focus on the border as a multiplication of labour and alert us to the risks of reducing its function to that of isolation because border struggles produce political subjectivity.²⁷ Although border politics

23 Zomia is a term first coined by Willem van Schendel to refer to the high-altitude area or territory stretching from north-east India to south-east Asia, whose peoples have historically been characterized as avoiding the incorporation in the nation-states. James C. Scott, however, takes the term further to consider Zomia as a sort of entity, a 'negative' region. Scott, *The Art of Not Being*, ix, xiv, 16; Van Schendel 'Geographies of knowing', 653.

24 Scott, *The Art of Not Being*, 19.

25 Lamb, *Kashmir*, 1-82; Haines, *Nation, Territory*, 17-51; Zutshi, *Languages of Belonging*; Rai, *Hindu Rulers*; Snedden, *Understanding Kashmir*.

26 Paasi 'Resurgence of the 'Region'; Keating, 'Invention of regions'.

27 Mezzadra and Neilson, *Border as a Method*, 7, 13.

does not necessarily happen at the border, the border does constitute a site from which to observe the continuing importance of territory in processes of border weakening, enforcement, and transformation.

The borderland perspective: seeing the conflict from the border

The analysis of the Kashmir dispute from the border – a border that displays an ambivalent spatiality – reveals the contiguities and ruptures of the space of conflict beyond its dominant representation as an ‘Indian’, ‘Indian-Pakistani’, and ‘Kashmiri’ affair. It highlights the claims made on behalf of statehood and shows how people living in various locations on both sides of the LoC feature in broader discourses about the dispute that do not reflect their views or experiences. In other words, the borderland perspective reveals the gap between hegemonic representations of the dispute and the views, experiences, and expectations of those represented by those imaginaries. For example, a 2007 report on Kashmir from the European Parliament deplores ‘the continuing political and humanitarian situation in all four parts of Jammu and Kashmir’, while also considering how to address the dispute in terms of managing the existing territorial borders of India and Pakistan, as well as promoting dialogue and exchanges across the LoC.²⁸ The report emphasizes the importance of democratization and the promotion of greater social equality in the Pakistani territories of AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan, discusses the Kashmir Valley as an issue of ‘violence’ in which abuses by security forces should not be tolerated, and ends by admitting that the conditions for the plebiscite, according to the United Nations resolutions, to ascertain the future of the former princely state can no longer be met.²⁹ Rather than a fairly balanced account of the conditions in the existing territories, the report is a political document expressing the European institution’s preference of siding with India’s viewpoint. The document advocates for the integration of the respective disputed territories into the states of India and Pakistan (a position that India favours, at least tacitly). Hence the report reduces the conflict to a matter of governance, ignoring both the local contexts in each of the territories and the aspirations of people that have motivated the conflict and supported its permanence over time.

28 European Parliament, Committee of Foreign Affairs, ‘Report on Kashmir’, 8.

29 Surprisingly, the report includes an interesting finding: ‘Kashmiris on the Chinese side remain outside that process’, 5. Common knowledge of the Kashmir dispute – which I also investigated on the Pakistani side – maintains that there are no permanent populations in the Chinese Kashmir areas of Aksai Chin and in the territory ceded by Pakistan to China in 1963, let alone that those living there can be identified as ‘Kashmiris’.

Theoretically, this book draws from the burgeoning literature on borders and territory in various social science and humanistic disciplines that was further developed after the 1990s. The main debates centre on processes of territorial fragmentation, liberalization (the 'borderless world' thesis), and border transformations and multi-territoriality; the critique of state space and the question of sovereignty; and the epistemological consequences derived from this critique, especially those consequences concerning state formation in non-Western societies and the history and politics of those living in the borderlands of many postcolonial states.³⁰ The present work engages with these debates through their intersection in the notion of borderland, as a way to question what Willem van Schendel calls 'geographies of knowing' – that is, how established cartographies presuppose hierarchies in knowledge production.

In the case of Kashmir, this dispute has been analysed through the lens of various international relations paradigms whose main concern lies in the anarchic character of international society and cooperation among states, as key actors in international political life, in preserving security and peace.³¹ However, what was initially studied as a territorial conflict between states (from a realist perspective) has gradually been examined through the lens of identity: either as two conflicting state identities (in a constructivist view), or in the context of the formation of regional identities *vis-à-vis* state nation-building processes.³² These 'identitarian' approaches at the state or substate level do not engage with the importance of context, state formation, and the question of sovereignty that results from decolonization.

State perspectives on the Kashmir dispute have underlined the centralized character of the Indian state and the lack of development of democratic processes in this territory to explain the insurgent movement that arose in the 1990s.³³ The same arguments apply to Pakistan with regard to the preservation of the Kashmir territories as 'separate' or 'independent'.³⁴ The academic literature on the Kashmir dispute tends to reproduce the bordered character of the LoC and rarely reflects on engagement (or lack of it) between the two sides. This can be seen in the work of Christopher Snedden, which discusses developments in the Kashmir Valley and AJK without relating

30 Paasi, *Territories, Boundaries*; Haesbaert, *Desterritorialización*; Agnew, *Globalization*; Elden, *Terror and Territory*; Vaughan-Williams, *Border Politics*; Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*; Edney, *Mapping an Empire*; Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*.

31 Acharya and Acharya, 'Kashmir in the International System'.

32 Behera, *State, Identity*; Bose, *Roots of Conflict*.

33 Widmalm, *Kashmir in Comparative Perspective*.

34 Snedden, *The Untold Story*, 83–110.

them to each other,³⁵ and of Sten Widmalm, which despite arguing for an indigenous understanding of the conflict in the Kashmir Valley situates the problem within the state framework of India's interventionism into the fragile democratic process of the state of Jammu and Kashmir.³⁶ The disputed character of the LoC as something that delimits the state space is addressed only marginally in both books. The work by Seema Kazi, which examines the militarization of the Indian Valley, maintains that the division of Kashmir was 'neither affirmed nor reversed', although the author clearly assumes that the Indian state is a security provider and criticizes the state's failure to provide security to its (Kashmiri) citizens.³⁷

During fieldwork I noticed that the state is very much at the root of the problem and is questioned on both sides of the LoC, albeit for different reasons. This can be observed at several levels: in the legal-political context of the territories, in the biographical accounts of local inhabitants, and in their inability to frame political demands and aspirations. The critique of the state, for example, appears in the imaginative proposals from various groups in Gilgit-Baltistan who seek political-territorial solutions for their territories as a way to overcome the political impasse.³⁸ Although inhabitants of the disputed territories are familiar with state spatiality through the dynamics of conflict, this socialization is experienced through an authoritarian form of politics that is characterized by interventions from the centres of political power through non-democratic means (the rule of exception). This is, in my view, an aspect worth investigating, and the present work attempts to fill this gap. In other words, it matters how people are being bordered.

The borderland approach shows how the conflict dynamics on both sides of the LoC are intertwined, and how a development in one specific location has the potential to impact others. For example, the basic demand of divided families in the border area between Baltistan and Ladakh (in the district of Kargil) to open the LoC for exchange is motivated by a sense of equal treatment, since this opportunity has been granted since 2005 to separated families in the Kashmir Valley and Azad Kashmir as a result of the dialogue process. Although Baltis normally claim that they have opted for Pakistan and have nothing to do with Kashmir, their demand that the LoC be opened is articulated on the basis that their territory, part of the former princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, is also disputed.

35 Snedden, *Understanding Kashmir*.

36 Widmalm, *Kashmir in Comparative*, 125.

37 Kazi, *Between Democracy*, 79 and 67-68.

38 Kreutzmann, 'Kashmir and the Northern Areas of Pakistan'.

The impact that the interrelations of various actors on both sides of the LoC have on each other can be tantamount to Norbert Elias' understanding of 'figuration'.³⁹ This concept has guided the present research under the Crossroads Asia programme as a way to study increasing patterns of mobility, and the construction of new spaces, in an area stretching from Western Iran to Northern India.⁴⁰ Elias did not consider actors as isolated in society, but instead as acting and impacting one another – that is, forming a figuration that constitutes a source of knowledge. According to him, concepts such as 'family' and 'football match' can only be understood through the mutual interaction of their members. In the case of the concept of 'family', for example, alterations in the practices of family members induce changes in how a 'family' is defined at a particular moment.⁴¹ Elias explained the term mainly with regard to the evolution of manners and emotions in court society, although he follows a similar methodology in his other works.⁴²

While Elias' approach in his sociological studies can be seen as normative from a contemporary perspective, it does offer a useful insight into social power relations within a spatial dimension. In fact, despite their different methodologies of inquiry and thematic preoccupations, it is possible to find connections between Elias' theories and the outcomes of Henry Lefebvre's book *The Production of Space*. Lefebvre's focus is on the production of space (social space), and he alludes to 'representations' that need to be investigated to expose their contradictions.⁴³ As he points out, 'Visible boundaries, such as walls or enclosures in general give rise for their part to an appearance of separation between spaces where in fact what exists is an ambiguous continuity.'⁴⁴ Similar views can be found in Elias' volumes of *The Civilizing Process* and his co-authored study with John L. Scotson in which he builds on the construction of social differences that imply spatial separation, such as in the building of a court society or the presence of new residents as 'strangers' against a established community in a Leicester suburb.⁴⁵

39 Elias, *What is Sociology?*, 128-33 and also from the same author *The Civilizing Process*, 489-490.

40 The Crossroads Asia programme received funding from the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research for the period 2011-2016, and it was organized as a competence network between several German universities and research institutes. See <http://crossroads-asia.de/crossroads-asia.html>

41 Elias, *What is Sociology?*, 13-14.

42 Elias, *The Civilizing Process*.

43 Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 41.

44 Ibid., 87.

45 Elias and Scotson, *The Collected Works of*.

Drawing from these ideas, what makes Kashmir (the dispute) is not the territory itself but rather the different actors acting in this territory, who shape it with their mutual activity and their attempts to induce changes in it. It is by observing this activity that a study of the conflict in its full dynamic character can be undertaken. Kashmir is not a static issue, despite the fact that ‘nothing relevant has happened’, as foreign policy analysts working on South Asia readily say. On the contrary, it is changing and there are several conflicting forces involved in the process. For this reason, although I do not expressly engage with the concept of figuration at length in this book, the idea of figuration is very much present in how interconnections are explored in the border territories.

Fieldwork in disputed border areas

This book is the result of fieldwork carried out between 2009 and 2014 at different sites in AJK, Gilgit-Baltistan, Ladakh, and the Kashmir Valley.⁴⁶ Various restrictions apply in these disputed zones: sometimes special permits (non-objection certificates) are needed to enter an area; sometimes, there is technically free mobility but also somebody monitoring one’s movements, thereby restricting one’s mobility. Military zones in the vicinity of the LoC are formally no-entry places for outsiders. For reasons of feasibility, then, I limited my research to four urban areas: Srinagar, Kargil, Muzaffarabad, and Skardu. The town of Baramulla in the Kashmir Valley might have been a better research site than Srinagar since a large number of families (and later boys-turned-militants) departed from there across the LoC, but as a number of other scholars acquainted with the security situation have pointed out, there are great difficulties associated with carrying out fieldwork in this location.⁴⁷ I conducted five detailed interviews near Baramulla in the summer of 2012; while I do refer to them in this book, they provide only very limited insight into the dynamics of the conflict.⁴⁸ In addition to the research in urban contexts, I also conducted fieldwork in neighbouring rural villages. The focus was, on the one hand, to study the connections and ruptures across the LoC and, on the other, to explore the importance of the different divided territories in the dispute and the spatial hierarchies created – for example, the pre-eminent role of the Kashmir Valley and AJK

46 With an additional visit to Baltistan in 2017.

47 Whitehead, *A Mission*, 3.

48 Although few in number, these interviews lasted for hours and were quite detailed in providing insights on the context in the area.

in the dispute compared to the peripheral position of Gilgit-Baltistan and Ladakh.

The fieldwork consisted of interviews, conversations, and the collection of local published and unpublished sources. Moreover, there has been an ethnographic component to my observations and participation in activities, but in no sense would I call this anthropological work. I mention this not to misguide the reader but to expose the problematic aspects of doing research in disputed zones because permits and the length of stay in one place are important issues. Researchers who have worked on the Kashmir divided territories have reflected on this aspect in their books: the impossibility for Indian scholars to do research on the Pakistani side and vice versa; foreigners working on human rights issues on the Pakistani side being unable to conduct work on the other side; and the difficulties experienced by foreign scholars in accessing some places, unless they have been 'invited' or supported by high-ranking officials.⁴⁹

These situations have also opened up a range of ethical issues that need to be discussed. I have adopted a series of measures to protect the anonymity of the people with whom I spoke, depending on the context and topic, which I explain in more detail below. I encountered no problems in interviewing businessmen involved in cross-LoC trade on either side, divided families in Kargil, and some nationalist politicians and religious leaders. In my interactions, references to 'the other side' (i.e., the opposite side of the border in each location) have normally been the most sensitive issue. As part of my interactions, I have noticed that educated people in the various locations (those who are referred to as understanding the conflict, bureaucrats and intellectuals among others) have only limited knowledge about the 'other side' compared with the accurate information possessed by ordinary divided families. The reason for this is that the latter are the only groups that continually re-enact ties of the shared space through phone or Skype conversations, exchanging videos of relatives, and meeting on either side or in a third country. In this regard, it is worth mentioning the borders of communication between the sides, still existing at the time of writing in 2018: those in Indian Kashmir cannot make calls to the Pakistani side, although the reverse is possible, and there are frequent temporary bans on mobile phones and the internet owing to perceived insecurity.⁵⁰

49 Behera, *State, Identity*, 16; Robinson, *Refugees: Political Subjectivity*, 41; Stern, *Terror in the Name*, 126-134.

50 As a consequence of the unrest which erupted in summer 2016 in the Kashmir Valley after the killing of the popular and respected militant Burhan Wani on 8 July, India banned all internet

In my fieldwork, I initially focused on two groups who have been particularly affected by the divided character of the LoC and who had an interest in opening the border within the context of the dialogue process: the separated families and traders. Interviews, both recorded and handwritten, have been a source of information. However, on many occasions I simply held conversations, avoiding writing them down *in situ*. Occasionally I have been explicitly told to not mention names and not to write because what was being said were contextualizations of a particular topic, although the insights were very interesting. I would later recollect these meetings in a diary, but in the form of ideas and opinions rather than full sentences that could be transcribed literally. I refer to these instances indirectly with the date and location of the meeting.

I was mainly interested in interviewing ordinary people who were affected by the conflict in various ways. However, in exploring the political status of these territories and investigating the 'Kashmir space', I was able to talk to lawyers, bureaucrats (only on the Pakistani side), nationalist leaders, former militants, locally recognized intellectuals, development organizations, cultural activists, and religious leaders, who also helped me to form an opinion about the intricacies of some aspects related to my topic. When I refer to 'ordinary people' I am expressing a critique of the tendency to explain conflicts by reducing them to a 'handful of key actors' as representatives of the various parties in the dispute, a tendency that avoids questioning the existence of problematic relations between the society in general and its leadership.

Chapter Outline

The structure of this book is divided into six chapters. The first chapter provides a succinct historical introduction to the construction of the Kashmir borderland, specifically after the creation of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir in 1846. Drawing from the Kashmir historiography, it discusses how the different territories of the princely state came together – from the sale of the Kashmir Valley to the conquest of Gilgit – as part of a larger territorialization process by the British colonial power intended to take control of the frontiers. The primary thrust of the princely state was the development of the Kashmir Valley as an economic centre; territories such as Ladakh or Baltistan became peripheral areas and were ruled through a

and mobile communications. The ban on communications, apart from the clear censorship, created a climate prone to human rights violations. See Ashraf, 'Kashmiris living outside'.

loose system of loyalties. This process of accumulation led to the emergence of an educated, politically active, Muslim middle class in the Valley and explains the development of a democratic movement in the Kashmir Valley in the initial decades of the twentieth century and the absence of such a development in the mountain territories, where feudal forms of authority continued to prevail.

Thus, at the time the subcontinent was partitioned the inhabitants of the various territories (notably people in the Valley rather than in Gilgit or Baltistan) experienced being part of the princely state differently. Notions of India, and above all of Pakistan (as a new state), were vague at the time, as evident from accounts collected from the elderly in Baltistan and the border area of Ladakh. Based on these trajectories, the chapter discusses the post-Partition context, which is characterized by the reproduction of the territorial unit of the princely state in the conflict negotiations, despite alterations to the status quo via legal-constitutional transformations in the divided areas.

The second chapter analyses the concept of borderland as a distinct political space, neither part of nor separate from the state. Willem van Schendel pointed out the normative implications of the study of borderlands by focusing on the peripheries of the state. Although his interest lay in the history of borderlands, the approach also applies to the study of borders as symbols of state security. Adopting a borderland perspective is not only a matter of shifting location but also of seeing borderlands as units of analysis, which, from a political point of view, implies exploring interventions into these territories at both the material and symbolic levels. This is the case with the transformations along the road from Srinagar to Kargil: militarization and the creation of a sense of fear that in turn justifies militarization, and the promotion and logistics surrounding the Amarnath *yatra*, a Hindu religious pilgrimage that has become a highly political issue. In each of these cases, interventions demonstrate the state incorporation of these territories by managing and at the same time changing the space of conflict. Interventions are also examined under the exceptional legal-constitutional regimes of AJK, Gilgit-Baltistan, and the special relationship of the Kashmir Valley to the Indian state. Despite processes of appropriation and division which have led to the articulation of popular resistance, the border territories have maintained coexistence to a certain degree, as reflected in the prevailing human and cultural diversity that is based on past interactions. Considering this diversity helps to understand that the Kashmir borderland is as much the result of a historical process as it is of a permanent denial of the opportunity to become a different political space.

To clarify what I mean by 'permanent denial of the opportunity to become a different political space', Chapters Three, Four, and Five address issues of fragmentation and interaction at various levels in the Kashmir divided territories, thereby providing a more dynamic understanding of spatiality than is normally described in representations of the dispute.

Thus, the third and fourth chapters examine the dispute that is habitually referred to as 'the Kashmir issue' and its frame in four urban areas: Srinagar, Muzaffarabad, Kargil, and Skardu. They explore the attachment (or not) of local inhabitants to the dispute and its manifestation in their everyday lives, in the process demonstrating what Stephen Graham describes as the intimate relationship of cities and war.⁵¹ As a militarized city, Srinagar is the epicentre of the conflict, with the dispute framed as opposition to the Indian state and the need to 'take a decision' (a plebiscite). In Muzaffarabad, the conflict mainly concerns people who have fled the Kashmir Valley at various times, and those who aim to regain the Valley, such as the militants. The third chapter also discusses the imposition of the term 'Kashmir' by the Pakistani state on those who would prefer Azad Kashmir to become part of Pakistan. Chapter Four shows how the context of conflict in Srinagar and Muzaffarabad differs radically from that of Kargil and Skardu, which can be regarded as peripheral territories in the dispute. The primary issue in Kargil and Skardu is the divisive nature of the LoC, since security measures arising from the permanent hostility between India and Pakistan render cross-border interaction almost impossible. The dynamics of conflict have, on the one hand, created new spatial hierarchies, demonstrating that the 'Kashmir issue' has gone beyond mere decisions about the future status of the Valley and, on the other hand, illustrate that developments in one place have impacts in other locations and are thus interrelated. By looking at manifestations of conflict in specific locations, these chapters show how bordering processes are intrinsic to the way social reality is framed 'within the borders'.

Drawing on the above-mentioned considerations, the fifth chapter is devoted to the question of locating people in the debates about borders, notably in relation to the ambivalent spatiality created by the LoC as a non-demarcated border. Hence the chapter focuses on explaining the ambiguous nature of the LoC and its transformation over time from a porous border that allowed the movement of displaced persons and militants to one that is highly fenced in an attempt to regulate cross-border traffic. It also discusses what exactly the LoC divides. It then contextualizes the cross-LoC initiatives

51 Graham, *Cities, War*, Introduction.

emanating from the India-Pakistan dialogue process that saw the establishment of cross-LoC bus and truck services between the Kashmir Valley and AJK. While these initiatives have been considered a sign of normalization between India and Pakistan, things are viewed differently on the ground. To clarify the case, the chapter delves into empirical material collected from two groups with an interest in the opening of the LoC – separated families and traders – some of whom have already benefitted from the cross-LoC exchanges that began in 2005. The chapter highlights the ongoing ‘border work’: despite the discourse on ‘making borders irrelevant’ and the creation of a post-conflict context in the Kashmir Valley (defined as ‘normalization’), new forms of bordering and control are being established. These bordering processes bear witness to attempts by the postcolonial state to gain control of the territory.

Finally, drawing from the case of Kashmir, the conclusion puts forward the concept of belonging as an analytical approach to the spatial problematic involved in border conflicts. It underlines the usefulness of this concept for the scholarly articulation of more inclusive political spaces, spaces which themselves are already in existence at societal level. Issues of belonging unfold in line with ongoing struggles about place-making. The chapter first examines the scope of the concept in relation to identity by emphasizing the problematics of place and space that are implied in both. It then goes on to discuss the aspect of displacement that is involved in the notion of belonging, as being in one place (and part of a collective) and longing for another, paying attention to the contexts in which this is articulated. Claiming belonging is thus tantamount to claiming recognition and becoming visible. The last section of the chapter focuses on the politics of belonging, with reference to the circumstances that lead people and groups to make a distinction between belonging and not belonging. Since belonging necessarily embodies a translocal and transnational experience, I argue that it generates specific knowledge about how the world is (b)ordered. The chapter shows that the investigation of issues of belonging leads to a new understanding of the Kashmir borderland that can provide insights into new ways of dealing with the dispute.

1 Kashmir: The Idea and its Parts

Abstract

The map of the Kashmir dispute conveys an idea of territorial continuity and unity that is understood not in the sense of identity but rather as a spatial relationship with the Kashmir Valley. The continued framing of the dispute as an issue between India and Pakistan and as a nationalist struggle in the Kashmir Valley reinforces the notion that there was once a consolidated colonial entity against which present developments are to be examined. However, since its creation Kashmir has been a contested space. A border perspective shows how territorialization processes that took place in the colonial and postcolonial period can explain the different attitudes held by those living in these disputed territories towards the whole Kashmir question.

Keywords: Kashmir, colonial entity, Partition, territorialization, militarization, border perspective

The contours of the Kashmir disputed map convey the idea of a spatial continuum, making it seem as if those who live within the contours of the former princely state inherently share some kind of bond, rather than simply having come to live side by side under the same ruler as the result of territorial conquests. As Winichakul Thongchai notes on the differences between pre-modern and modern maps as representations of spatial reality in his work on the making of Siam as a nation, 'boundary lines must exist *before* a map' because maps refer to an existing reality.¹ The map of the Kashmir dispute also expresses an idea that this region is a politically integrated territory rather than a collection of loosely administered areas. In his seminal work *Mapping an Empire*, Mathew Edney points out that the mapping of British India through the Great Trigonometrical Survey served as the key 'to the conceptual consolidation of a pre-existent India'.² Similarly, it can be said

¹ Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*, 56.

² Edney, *Mapping an Empire*, 21.

that the mapped configuration of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir and its continued reproduction as a unit (albeit partitioned between India and Pakistan by a discontinuous line) over multiple decades demonstrates an essentialist understanding of the disputed territory. The unity conveys an idea of territorial contiguity that overlooks the fragments and fissures of the princely state that were never fully administratively integrated but rather shared an economic and political centre in the Kashmir Valley.

During Chitralekha Zutshi's presentation of her book *Kashmir's Contested Pasts* at the University of Srinagar in October 2014, a student asked the author why, despite the name 'Kashmir' being in the title, her work only focused on the Kashmir Valley instead of considering 'the entire Kashmir'.³ The student explained that, given the title, he had expected the book to also address the historical experiences of Gilgit, Baltistan, and Azad Kashmir, among others. Zutshi answered that her interest was the Valley and its interrelations with other locations; it was not her intention to take 'the unit' of the princely state as a preconceived spatial container that delimited her scope. Instead, she explained, her focus was on the ideas and historical debates surrounding the making of Kashmir, which have centred on the homonymous Valley. The question posed by the student illustrates a common misunderstanding based on the map of Kashmir: that the name 'Kashmir' embraces all of the territories included in the former princely state, not just the Kashmir Valley. This view implies the existence of a degree of Kashmiriness in all of the territories – 'Kashmiriness' understood as a spatial relationship with the Kashmir Valley, not an identity.⁴ It also implies that the former princely state had a degree of territorial integrity, even though it was not a sovereign territory in the modern sense.⁵ The principle of territorial integrity did not apply to the princely state because it suffered territorial modifications made by the British colonial power. However, India and Pakistan, which

3 Zutshi, *Contested Pasts*.

4 Not to confuse with *Kashmiriyat*, an ideological construct which refers to harmonious Muslim-Pandit relations from a historical perspective. During my fieldwork in various sites, and mainly in the Kashmir Valley and AJK, I noticed that people did not engage with this concept. Ankur Datta also questions the ideology of *Kashmiriyat* in his study of the displaced Kashmiri Pandits in Jammu. *Uncertain Ground*, 116-117.

5 The historian Mridu Rai refers to a territorialization of sovereignty after the Treaty of Amritsar in 1846 by which the East India Company tried to restrain the authority of Dogra rulers in territories of the Punjab and at the same time favoured the concentration of all power in the figure of the maharaja. *Hindu Rulers*, 30-31, 54-57. Moreover, Daniel Haines, in his study of the conflict over the waters of the Indus river that arose after Partition, shows how India and Pakistan related control over water with control over territory. *Rivers Divided*.

have controlled the divided parts since 1948, have continued to refer to that principle in their own attempts to make territorial claims over the LoC.⁶

Although no one in the subfield of Kashmiri studies would equate territorial enclosure (the political entity of the princely state) with nationhood (Kashmiriness), until now there has been little effort to explain the disconnections among the various territories in terms of their different historical trajectories.⁷ The answers to the questions of what is (and what is not) Kashmir and what it means to be (or not be) part of Kashmir can underscore the circumstances in which different groups articulate diversity. This articulation occurs within a specific spatial framework, which in this case is mainly the state. By adopting a border perspective the state-making process (in terms of the internal integration of India and of Pakistan) becomes problematized, because this frame of reference not only grasps a 'neglected history' that responds to a socio-spatial field of enquiry but also allows for the rethinking of how social groups are studied and the conceptualizations that result from such approaches.⁸ A detailed historical account would be necessary for this exercise, but is beyond the scope of this work.

This chapter sketches the main historical processes of territorialization that led to the formation of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, particularly underlining the strategic, geographical, and economic factors. The first section explores the making of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir as the result of an intertwined process of British colonial frontier policy and the formation of a political and economic centre in Srinagar (and to some extent Jammu) by the Dogra rulers or maharajas. The second section describes how this process of territorial appropriation and the associated economic exploitation of resources and people in specific locations created differentiated contexts that influenced the position of local actors toward ongoing events at the time of Partition. The third section deals with the difference between the territorial claims and the actual policies of territorial control by India and Pakistan (and some nationalist groups) to territories

6 On the principle of territorial integrity in the contemporary sense, see Elden, *Terror and Territory*, 139–170.

7 Scholars working on the disputed territories have normally emphasized its social diversity in relation to the articulation of a political identity vis-à-vis Pakistani, Indian, and Kashmiri nationalism. However, this identity-based explanation undermines the territorial aspect which is the matter of contention. There are some exceptions in anthropological works which examine this point from a more 'localized' view. Cabeiri deBergh Robinson addresses this by asking who is a 'refugee' in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, *Body of Victim*, 59–64. Mona Bhan also problematizes this disconnection by analysing the 'transborder' condition of the Brokpa, *Counterinsurgency*, 5–7, 28–33.

8 Van Schendel, *Bengal Borderland*, 363–369.

across the LoC. Each of the disputing parties resorts to the argument of the territorial integrity of the former princely state while simultaneously pursuing policies of state integration of the territories under their control. Finally, I refer to the specific context of the Kashmir Valley, in which the popular opposition to the integration process in India has developed over the years into a struggle for the Valley as a disputed or a 'normal' part of the Indian state.

Making the princely state: fixing borders and building a power centre in the Kashmir Valley

The Kashmir dispute is the direct outcome of the political events that led to the Partition of the Indian subcontinent in August 1947 and the specific developments in its northern corner, the western Himalayas. However, its modern roots can be traced to one hundred years earlier. On 16 March 1846, the British representatives of the East India Company signed the Treaty of Amritsar with the Dogra ruler Raja Gulab Singh, in which the latter purchased and took control of the Kashmir Valley. Raja Gulab Singh hailed from a family ruling in Jammu that had until then been in a vassal position to the Sikh Empire.⁹ He had conquered the territories of Ladakh and Baltistan in 1841.¹⁰ Based on these historical events, the local scholar Hussain Abadi, who hails from Skardu, has argued, 'Baltistan was occupied finally in 1841; the conquest took place first in 1840 but people revolted. The kingdom of Jammu, under Lahore's suzerainty, expanded its borders to Baltistan. Kashmir [the Valley] had nothing to do with Jammu because the latter was under the direct government of Lahore under the Sikhs'.¹¹ Abadi maintains that these various layers of suzerainty are important for highlighting the different historical trajectories of Baltistan and Ladakh, despite attempts to link the fates of these territories with that of the Kashmir Valley.

After the creation of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, British colonial officers and Dogra rulers moved to establish authority along the northern borders, west of the Indus river, in what is today part of

9 Almost three decades earlier, in 1819, the Kashmir Valley had passed from the rule of the Afghan Durranis to the Sikhs. On the formation of the State of Jammu and Kashmir: Lamb, *Kashmir*, 7-9; Zutshi, *Languages of Belonging*, 46-48; Rai, *Hindu Rulers*, 18-79.

10 Janet Rizvi, *Ladakh*, 81-87; Hussain Abadi, *Tārīkh-i Baltistān*, 167-177. For an interesting essay on Baltistan's historiography and its 'becoming part of history' under the Dogras, see Bredi, 'L'uso delle fonti'.

11 Interview with Yousuf Hussain Abadi, Skardu, 8 August 2009.

Gilgit (including the territories to the east of Hunza and Nagar). The Dogras enforced their power in these areas by establishing garrisons and forts, which were maintained by a military force and a few officers from the central administration such as agents and district commissioners.¹² Their military control facilitated the activities of small Sikh and Hindu communities motivated by the economic opportunities provided by existing trading networks.¹³ However, power was decentralized and local rulers exercised authority by collecting taxes and dealing with matters of justice. Some of them, such as the Muslim rajas of Khaplu in Baltistan, employed Hindu clerks (such as *munshis* or accountants) within their administrations.¹⁴ The elderly people I spoke to in Baltistan and in the border areas of Ladakh described Dogra rule as 'brutal' and 'oppressive'; taxes were paid, but no improvements were introduced to these areas, and the use of forced labour (*begar*) by the administration for portage purposes became widespread.¹⁵

It is important to point out the distinction between 'Dogra' and 'Kashmiri' in the emic perspective: the people I interviewed in the various locations where I carried out fieldwork used the two terms to highlight different things. 'Dogra rule' referred to the fact that rulers were from elsewhere and stressed the Hindu religion, while the term 'Kashmiri' was more ambivalent. Sometimes the term 'Kashmiri' indicated a ruler from the Valley who exercised power locally (i.e., a 'Kashmiri' as an outsider and a colonizer), and on other occasions 'Kashmiri' was identified with the ruler and his administration. The latter use implies, wrongly, that the Hindu identity of the ruler was extended to his administration, and this was expressed by Muslim interviewees as a sign of differentiation, and thus as indication of the alien (non-Muslim character of his rule). These interviewees apparently did not reflect on the fact that Muslims were also part of the Kashmiri administration. The accounts of people in the border areas between Ladakh and Baltistan underscored the oppression inflicted by the ruler, which was equally suffered by Kashmiris of the Valley, particularly rural peasants,

12 On this policy of fortification led by the British but also followed and supported by the Kashmir Army, see Kreutzmann, *Wakhan Quadrangle*, 50-53.

13 The social plurality that emerged in those places is reflected in the description by the British officer and explorer Reginald Schomberg as cited in Kreutzmann, *Wakhan Quadrangle*, 207.

14 Descendants of the former raja family of Khaplu confirmed this point.

15 I only came across a positive view of this period in discussion with a middle-aged man in Baltistan, who underlined the infrastructural transformations carried out by the last maharaja in the 1920s and 1930s. These initiatives were connected to the national building process. MacDonald, 'Push and shove'; Bray, 'Transport *begar*'.

but also the alien character of this power that was exercised from a distant place.¹⁶

The historiography of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Kashmir has shed substantial light on the gradual development of the Valley as a centre of the political and economic power of the Dogra ruling elite, who were supported by an administration dominated by Kashmiri Pandits (an educated local elite of the Hindu religion), (Hindu) Dogras from Jammu, Punjabis (Hindus and Sikhs), and a tiny section of local Muslims.¹⁷ The majority of the Muslim peasantry, however, lived in hard conditions. Socio-economic transformations in the first decades of the twentieth century allowed access to education for a significant number of Muslim lower middle-class people in the Valley. This class, along with other groups, began to organize politically and articulate their demands to the authoritarian and feudal government in the 1920s and 1930s.¹⁸ In framing their cause as an oppressed group, Muslims from the Kashmir Valley used identitarian language based on religion and ideas of modern state territoriality. However, they also articulated their demands in terms of justice based on the alien nature – that is, coming from outside the Valley and therefore considered superior – and authoritarianism of the ruler.

The making of modern Kashmir after 1846 was the result of two intertwined territorialization processes: the British frontier policy toward what is today known as an area at the intersection of South and Central Asia, and the formation of a political and economic power centre in the Kashmir Valley and Jammu. The prosperity of the Kashmir Valley and Jammu rested on their fertile soil and agriculture, manufacturing industries (such as shawls and handicrafts), and location along larger trading networks. Despite the limited number of access routes to the Valley, Kashmir was far from an isolated area.¹⁹ However, the Dogra rulers, together with the British, maintained control over the mobility of both the peasantry and foreigners. Fostered by the British, the making of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir can be seen as an attempt to bring the frontier territories under 'state' control while also reorganizing the markets along emerging economic centres.

Once the princely state was formed, its domestic territorial organization followed a centre-periphery model in which geographical criteria were

16 Although written as a personal account of the event, the Kashmiri politician Prem Nath Bazaz provides an idea of the harsh conditions faced by ordinary people in the princely state, *Inside Kashmir*, 61–66. See also Zutshi, *Languages of Belonging*, 65–68.

17 Zutshi, *Languages of Belonging*, Ch. 2; Rizvi, *Trans-Himalayan Caravans*, 50–55.

18 Zutshi, *Languages of Belonging*, 179–209; Lamb, *Kashmir*, 85–99.

19 Zutshi, 'Rethinking Kashmir's history', 599.

determinant. Political and economic power became concentrated in the relatively flat and better connected lands of the Kashmir Valley and Jammu plains while the sparsely populated and less accessible surrounding mountain regions became secondary markets, subservient in many cases to the economy generated around the main urban centres.²⁰ Leh was a node for the *pashm* (cashmere, raw material from fine goats' hair used in the Kashmir shawls) trade to the Valley and for secondary trading routes leading north to Yarkand, Khotan, and neighbouring Baltistan and east to various locations in Tibet. Through the building of roads, people living in formerly isolated and vulnerable areas in Baltistan, Kargil, and Shina-speaking villages such as Dras became gradually incorporated into the economy of the princely state as a labour force, working mainly as porters or transporting loads on horses.²¹ This process of inclusion of the former 'frontier territories' occurred through indirect rule, which preserved local feudal power structures. While in the core territories of the Kashmir Valley and Jammu place-making irremediably involved new sections of the society becoming gradually engaged in the political process, in the sparsely populated peripheral areas this was prevented by military control and the preservation of feudal forms of power. The *Gazetteer of Kashmir and Ladak* of 1890 describes the 'outlying governorships' of Gilgit, Baltistan, and Ladakh in the following way:

Each is under a governor (Gilgit is at present under two joint-governors), who corresponds directly with the Maharaja, and who apparently has considerable independence in internal matters. The countries thus administered are of military occupation; and the State demand is light, because the people would probably resist a heavy one. In Baltistan the land is taxed pretty heavily; the revenue must exceed one and a half lakh. The governor resides at Skardu. In Ladakh there is a governor who must be chiefly at Leh, because he is a joint commissioner under the commercial treaty of 1870.²²

Ordinary people in the mountain valleys were deprived of any political agency because they were considered incapable of political subjecthood.²³

20 Faggi and Ginestri, 'Rete dei bazar'.

21 Rizvi, *Trans-Himalayan Caravans*, 253-255.

22 *Gazetteer, Gazetteer of Kashmir and Ladak*, 118.

23 See for example the description provided by the colonial agent Major William Brown, *Gilgit Rebellion*. Although this is the view of a colonial officer, it provides an idea of the administration of these territories. Major Brown describes the peasantry as greedy/selfish and lacking in political loyalty, 8-10, 24-25, 259.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, the British colonial administration gradually imposed its own ideas of territoriality over the Dogras in the northern frontier. The western Karakoram was unknown to the colonial power, and Gilgit town served as the base for access to these regions.²⁴ The maharajas of Kashmir sought to expand their influence northward and eventually clashed with British interests around what is today Gilgit, including several petty fiefdoms such as Hunza, Nagar, Ishkoman, Yasin, and Punial.²⁵ The reasons for such disagreements were related to the gradual framing of a British frontier policy for Central Asia, guided by political developments in the neighbouring region of Xinjiang as a result of the weakening of the Manchu dynasty and increasing Russian influence.²⁶ The British did not trust the expansionist adventures of Ranbir Singh, the maharaja of Kashmir at the time; to limit such activities, which had the potential to endanger British dominance, the colonial power sought to exercise control over the then-peripheral areas.²⁷ There was a lack of knowledge about these territories and this was addressed through the local surveying led by different European, mainly British, and native explorers as part of the Great Trigonometrical Survey of India to measure the Indian subcontinent land.²⁸ Moreover, colonial policy oscillated between indirect control and more active involvement in the northern frontier, which affected relations with Kashmir. An example of this is the establishment of a short-lived Agency in Gilgit (1877-1881) meant to gain influence and loyalty over the rulers of the surrounding petty fiefdoms; the agency was abruptly cancelled because of political differences but re-established in 1899 with similar purposes.²⁹ At the same time, the British favoured territorial fixation with neighbouring powers, such as viewing the boundary pillars erected at the Karakoram pass in early 1890s as those marking the limit of the Indian Empire.³⁰

Another element that is important for understanding the making of Kashmir is the purchase of the Valley by the Dogras. Article 3 of the Treaty of Amritsar refers to the transfer of the territories to the maharaja Gulab

24 Snedden, *Understanding Kashmir*, 92-93; Alder, *British India's*, 30-31, 106.

25 The eastern territory of Chilas and Astore, south of Bunji, were also part of this process of incorporation.

26 Lamb, *Kashmir*, 19-23.

27 *Ibid.*, 22.

28 Alder, *British India's*, 106-107; Kreutzmann, *Wakhan Quadrangle*, 52-80. Alder's book focuses on British frontier policy and Russian competition while Kreutzmann's provides a more detailed account of the role of native explorers in this process of gathering knowledge and the general policy of control of the frontier and safeguarding the loyalty of local leaders through apanage.

29 Adler, *British India's*, 100-159.

30 Lamb, *Kashmir*, 26; Alder, *British India's*, 279-280; Chohan, *Gilgit Agency*.

Singh and his male heirs for a sum of 75 *lakh* rupees, and Article 10 states the maharaja's commitment to recognize British supremacy by the payment of an annual tribute consisting of 'one horse, twelve shawl goats of approved breed (six male and six female) and three pairs of Cashmere shawls'.³¹ This historical episode is of enormous importance in the contemporary narrative of Kashmiri nationalism because it is often compared to how the maharaja Hari Singh signed the Instrument of Accession to India in October 1947 without any consideration of the people's sentiments. The selling of the Valley to the Dogras was often cited in conversations during my fieldwork in the Valley to justify the idea that Kashmiris have never been able to decide their own future; others have always done it for them. Being ruled by an outside, and thus a colonizing, power is a continuous determinant in the articulation of the nationalist narrative, although it has received surprisingly little attention in comparison with ethnic and religious identity markers.³²

The princely state was an internally complex entity: Jammu and the Kashmir Valley were under the direct control of the maharaja and its administration, while the annexed areas of Ladakh and Baltistan – later jointly administrated under the Ladakh Wazarat (province) – and (in intermittent periods) the Gilgit Wazarat were indirectly administered.³³ Moreover, Gilgit was initially unified by the British under the Gilgit Agency in 1877-1881; it was reappropriated by the British in 1889 and was then governed by a dual administration under the British and the Dogras. In 1935 the Gilgit Agency, covering a territory that extended southwards to Bunji, was leased to the British for an initial period of 60 years; with their withdrawal from the subcontinent, this lease terminated on 1 August 1947.³⁴ The Gilgit case shows how the British colonial power, with the agreement of the ruler of the princely state, repeatedly altered the territorial integrity of the princely state. There were also a number of other internal territorial discontinuities such as the status of the Poonch *jagirdar* (fiefdom) which, according to Snedden, had a sort of semi-independent status until 1936.³⁵

31 Cited in Bazaz, *Inside Kashmir*, 34.

32 Ibid., 58. This idea is also mentioned by Mridu Rai when she relates 'the declining relevance of Kashmir's Muslim subjects to the Dogra state's for legitimacy', in *Hindu Rulers*, 294.

33 Which parts of the Gilgit Wazarat were under the Dogras was not always clearly defined.

34 On which territories included the Gilgit Agency and the lease area, see Snedden, *Understanding Kashmir*, 118-119; Lamb, *Kashmir*, Ch.3 and Ch.4; Chohan, *Gilgit Agency*, 203-211; Kreutzmann, 'Boundaries and space', 280.

35 The first Dogra maharaja, Gulab Singh, had granted his younger brother the Poonch *jagir*, a territory that enjoyed significant autonomy as a sort of enclave within the princely state. Snedden, *Understanding Kashmir*, 123.

At the time of Partition, the area of the princely state beyond the Valley and Jammu was held together through minimal administration and a military presence in specific locations. The centres of government and administration in Srinagar and Jammu were located in the most populated areas, where wealth was accumulated. The other territories could be described as peripheral, at least in the cases of Ladakh and Baltistan, because they were economically and politically dependent on communication with the centres.³⁶ While an incipient democratic culture advocating representative politics had developed in the Valley in the 1920s and 1930s, this was lacking in the mountain areas of Ladakh and Baltistan. After the creation of a legislative assembly, restricted electoral processes occurred in the Valley, while candidates from territories such as Baltistan were simply nominated and normally belonged to the rajas' families. The Gilgit Agency, controlled by the British until 1 August 1947, was administered by a Political Agent who co-opted the local traditional leadership. The British also drew legitimacy in the area from the recruitment of a loyal local paramilitary force, the Gilgit Scouts, who were tasked with guarding the frontiers. Its soldiers were from the local nobility, and military enrolment provided a source of income and prestige in a context of limited economic opportunities.

Influences that could have brought social change to the mountain areas – such as modern education – were restricted. As an indicator, while in the 1930s and 1940s there were already a significant number of Kashmiris from the Valley and Muzaffarabad areas studying in Aligarh Muslim University (a popular destination for Muslim students from Kashmir), only one person from Skardu, Ghulam Wazir Mehdi, is known to have obtained a degree (in law) in this institution during this period.³⁷ Migrants from Baltistan were

36 Exceptions to this case could be Hunza and Nagar, whose rulers or Mirs had developed room to maneuver due to their strategic position and relations with the former Eastern Turkistan (Kashgar and today's Yarkand). In fact, the Mir of Hunza (and that of Nagar) signed for the accession to Pakistan. The Poonch *jagirdar*, in present AJK, also represents an exception because its economy depended on the recruitment of soldiers for the British Indian Army and at the time of Partition, popular discontent with the maharaja led to an uprising which triggered the conflict. On the Poonch uprising, see Snedden, *Untold Story*, 41–46.

37 In an interview with the sons of Ghulam Wazir Mehdi, they mentioned that their grandfather took his child to Chitral to attend school because at the time there were no possibilities for education in Baltistan. After studying in Aligarh, he became politically active and was the local leader of the Pakistan Muslim League and later held administrative positions in Baltistan. Although he is known as the first person from the area to study in Aligarh, I gathered oral accounts that suggest that there was at least one other student some decades earlier from the area of Khaplu. Apart from these students receiving modern education, there was a fair stream of pupils from eastern Baltistan who attended madrasas in northern India, such as Deoband. Others, mostly Shia and Nurbakhshi, received training in Iraq and Iran.

usually involved in unskilled or semi-skilled petty labour, normally in public work as coolies,³⁸ in the territories of the princely state and in other places such as Simla and Lahore.³⁹

These experiences show that the princely state was far from being a homogeneous entity. In the state-making process there was a hierarchy of places that were to some extent functional in terms of the processes of capital accumulation – mainly the Valley and Jammu, which benefited intermediaries in locations such as Leh and Gilgit, while the mountainous areas continued to be deprived. This context helps explain why events were very localized and shaped by conditions in the immediate neighbourhood, rather than a wider, more orchestrated reaction to the Partition process.

Partition and the importance of taking sides

The domestic context of the Kashmir Valley in the years preceding 1947 and during Partition has received a great deal of attention from historians.⁴⁰ However, accounts of developments in the northern and north-eastern parts of the princely state at the time have been limited to the narration of political events, specifically how local groups in Gilgit and Baltistan reacted to the Partition of the subcontinent and political events in the Kashmir Valley, and how those affected described the events in areas such as Zangskar.⁴¹ These works demonstrate that local circumstances differed considerably from place to place. For example, in mid-October 1947 the Kashmir Valley was invaded by peoples from the Tribal Areas and the Frontier (in today's Pakistani province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa or KPK), backed by members of the Pakistani army who, on the basis of Muslim solidarity, wanted to prevent the Muslim-majority state from becoming part of India. Rather than welcoming them as liberators, however, many Kashmiris organized to repel the intruders, who were responsible for looting, rape, and destruction; the incident triggered India's intervention and the ultimate accession of the

38 MacDonald, 'Push and shove', 291.

39 In her book *Imperial Simla*, Pamela Kanwar makes reference to Muslim coolies from the Kashmir Valley working in Simla in the beginning of the twentieth century through Kashmiri contractors. Some of them were from Ladakh; the author describes them as 'Shia Muslims from Kargil'. Although not formally cited, Baltis were also part of these groups, 180-181.

40 Specifically, the works by Lamb, *Kashmir*; Zutshi, *Languages of Belonging*; Rai, *Hindu Rulers*; and Snedden, *Understanding Kashmir*, Part 2.

41 On Baltistan, Abadi, *Tārikh-i Baltistān*, 210-227; Mahajan, *Debacle in Baltistan*; on events in Gilgit, Sökefeld, 'Colonialism to postcolonial'; and on Zangskar see, Gutschow, 'Being Buddhist'.

state to India.⁴² Meanwhile, in Gilgit, a rebellion escalated from late October 1947 and spread in a north-south direction, reaching Skardu in early 1948 and continuing further south that year. The main group behind this revolt was the aforementioned Gilgit Scouts, the local paramilitary force created by the British.⁴³ The Scouts developed an agenda of liberating the territory from the Dogras and were supported by a variety of local militias, including groups from neighbouring Chitral (in today's KPK province of Pakistan).⁴⁴ As of yet, the historiography of Kashmir has not been able to clarify the possible interrelations between these two developments.⁴⁵

At first glance, the events taking place in different locations of the state show various agendas at work. On the one hand, there was a force, manifested in the Dogra administration, which was interested in preserving or perpetuating the territorial boundaries of the princely state; on the other hand, the continuation of the princely state was questioned by groups on its northern periphery. In this context, religious affiliations were only one among a number of mobilizing factors: as religion per se does not explain the opposition to the Pathan invasion in the Kashmir Valley, nor was the Gilgit rebellion primarily framed in terms of religious considerations. Key actors and groups reacted to local conditions differently in the attempt to improve their positions in a context of political uncertainty where spatial references were unclear. One key element was the positioning of local rajas, who exercised power locally and also oppressed the peasantry. For example, oral accounts suggest that the raja of Khaplu (and possibly also that of Kharmang) was not very sympathetic to Pakistan, as he was a close friend of the maharaja of Kashmir.

During interviews and informal conversations with older people in Baltistan and in the border villages on the Indian side in which we discussed the local context during 1947-1949, references to 'Pakistan' were quite vague, though Islam was mentioned as a motivation for those who had moved from the Indian to the Pakistani side, and India was associated with 'Hinduism'.

42 Whitehead, *A Mission*.

43 Sökefeld, 'Colonialism to postcolonial'.

44 Chitral was a princely state formerly linked to Gilgit until 1901, when the British merged it with the newly formed North-West Frontier province. People I met in Baltistan, including a few men who lived through Partition, mentioned that these militias were constituted by locals (Baltis), and people from Rondu, Gilgit, and Chitral. I never came across specific evidence that 'Pakistanis' (representatives of the army) were involved in the initial fighting. On Chitral, see Kreutzmann, 'Kashmir and the Northern Areas', 212.

45 Snedden makes a reference to this point by assuming that they were two separate developments, *Untold Story*, 45.

There was a consensus of negative views of the 'maharaja period', generally associated with the exploitative character of the administration. One old man in the village of Turtuk, a peasant probably in his seventies, recalled that once in his childhood he had seen an officer of the maharaja on a horse, who had come to his village to collect taxes. He stated that the rulers in Srinagar had done nothing for them, and he compared that situation with the present context (at the time of the interview) of being part of India, when many facilities were provided in the village and there were government jobs available.⁴⁶

Header Shah, who lived through the events of the liberation war in 1947-1949 and who was around 90 years old when I interviewed him in 2010, narrated the siege of Skardu and the later advancement of the local platoons and fighters (helped by other cadres from Gilgit, Nagar, and Chitral) towards Leh.⁴⁷ I asked about the participation of Pakistani soldiers in the episode and what, according to him, were the main reasons for which these guerrillas, with support of the population, were fighting, that is, to join India or Pakistan. He mentioned that as the militia advanced towards Leh, there were initially no Indian forces, and when (probably Ladakhi) forces came, the local guerrillas had to retreat as far as Brolmo (a village some 20-30 kilometres north-west of Kargil; this means that they had to give up Kargil). According to his account, no regular Pakistani soldiers were there at the time; it was only after the first Political Agent in Baltistan arrived that forces were dispatched to the border area. As for why people became involved in the fighting, he said that 'they were not thinking about any of this [joining India or Pakistan]. We wanted to get rid of the Dogras.'

These testimonies indicate that the disintegration of the former princely state led to a power vacuum that was ultimately filled with the accession of Gilgit and Baltistan to Pakistan. Admitting that religious sentiments may have had an influence on the preference for joining Pakistan, there is little doubt that the bureaucracy of the new state was ambivalent about how to integrate the area. Further developments suggest that Pakistani officials

46 Interview, Turtuk, 21 July 2012. In my interviews with ordinary villagers on both the Indian (Kargil and Chhorbat La areas) and Pakistan sides (Skardu and Khaplu), *sarkari* ('government jobs') were often mentioned as a sign of integration into a polity, in the sense that having a government job means that the state is taking care of people.

47 I had two long interviews with Haider Shah on 25 and 26 March 2010 at his home in Skardu. The interview, in Balti language, was carried out with the help of a translator. Like many Baltis, Header Shah migrated during his youth to Simla, Jammu, and Sialkot in search of work. He was working as a shop assistant in Sialkot when the events surrounding Partition began. Though not without difficulty, he managed to return to Skardu to reunite with his family.

were considering the merger of Baltistan and the Frontier (*sarhad*, today's KPK) or with Azad Jammu and Kashmir and used tricks such as sending local men to Peshawar to present them as representatives of the popular support for this merger with the Frontier.

Certainly Indian nationalist movements were well known and active in the Valley at the time, compared to the limited local influence of the Muslim League in their demand for the new entity of Pakistan.⁴⁸ However, at the time of Partition the main experience of authority for those living in smaller towns and villages in the relatively remote areas of Zangskar, Baltistan, and the Gilgit Agency was that of the respective local rulers and the Kashmiri officers – and in places such as Baltistan and Gilgit the population was not happy about it.⁴⁹ Hence, local narratives in these territories question the broader account of joining India and Pakistan and present a more uncertain view about the future territorial setting. They emphasize the importance of fighting against a regime perceived as tyrannical, among other more personal motivations, rather than mobilizing in favour of a state about which they had little knowledge. In other words, the context of political uncertainty made it possible for several actors to exploit the situation but, at first, ideas about India and Pakistan were vague and probably remote from local experiences of belonging.

Territorial integrity and transformation of the border space

The Kashmir dispute is still considered a concern about the territorial integrity of the former princely state. This notwithstanding, territorial changes in the colonial period and the revolts against Dogra rule in Mirpur and Gilgit at the time of Partition raise serious doubts about the survival of the former entity. The princely state disintegrated in the aftermath of

48 Ian Copland, 'Princely states', 54-55.

49 The insights gathered from people in Baltistan often expressed criticism of the Kashmiri rulers, but avoided discussing the role of local rajas. This can partly be because, unlike the alien nature of former Kashmiri officers, raja families are members of the local society, enjoy social recognition, and participate in politics. The raja of Skardu at the time of Partition was supportive of Pakistan, and in this sense there was no major disagreement with the wishes of the ordinary people revolting against the Dogra rule. Ordinary people, however, often saw local rajas as oppressors. An interviewee from a village near Khaplu recalled during a discussion over the abolition of the raja rule by Z.A. Bhutto in the mid-1970s: 'How we could not be happy about that? Before [the Bhutto reforms] we had to cultivate the land and give one third of our harvest to the raja family. This was a great burden on us. When the raja rule was abolished, we became free of this obligation.' Interview, Skardu, June 2017.

Partition. However, the criterion of territorial contiguity has continued to prevail in the way India and Pakistan frame the dispute.⁵⁰ The discourse on solving the Kashmir question has continued to be about the preservation of the entity of the princely state.

Following India taking the matter to the United Nations (UN) on 21 April 1948, the UN issued Resolution 47, one of whose clauses recommended that a plebiscite be held (this was initially suggested by Jawaharlal Nehru).⁵¹ The UN's recommendations and involvement until the early 1960s did not open up the question of partitioning the state. In this framing, the diverse aspirations of the various territories that were part of the former princely state but did not necessarily want to continue to be, such as Gilgit and Baltistan, were subsumed into the greater narrative of the desire for control over the Kashmir Valley.⁵² India's and Pakistan's aspirations about gaining control over the Valley contributed to the idealization of this specific place and ignored the diversity of local sentiments in the various territories. In this new geopolitical scenario, the external borders of the former princely state of Jammu and Kashmir gained prominence because India, Pakistan, and those supporting Kashmiri independence were all claiming the entire former entity.

On the ground, however, the disintegration caused by Partition materialized in the ceasefire line, known as the LoC after 1972. The armed conflict started in late October 1947, with fighting lasting until mid-1949 in the areas near Kargil. After that, people in the recently divided areas continued to move back and forth for a while, looking for a new place to settle due to fear in their native location, maintaining their usual routines (visiting relatives, tending their fields or grazing grounds that fell on the other side of the border), searching for missing relatives, or simply continuing their businesses. Local accounts suggest that this was a dramatic period, as recalled by a man in his late eighties whom I interviewed in Skardu in

50 As early as 1952, Jawaharlal Nehru was already reflecting on this issue concerning the differences between the Kashmir princely state and Jammu and the possibility that Kashmir should go to Pakistan in a note to Sheikh Abdullah on the Kashmir accession: 'In fact, Jammu and Kashmir have to hold together. If Jammu is separated, Kashmir goes. If Kashmir goes, Jammu's position becomes precarious and the conflict does not end. Statesmanship therefore requires that Jammu and Kashmir should go together'. From *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, 322-330. Quoted in A.G. Noorani, *The Kashmir*, 178-179.

51 United Nations, 'Resolution 47'; Korb, *Danger in Kashmir*, 107, 113-114.

52 Kabir, *Territory of Desire*. Kabir limits her analysis of artworks to India's desire for the Kashmir Valley but the main argument that 'representation in modernity constructed Kashmir as a territory of desire' (p. 209) can be extended to the way in which not only India, but also Pakistan and Kashmiri nationalism, have framed political discourses on the region.

September 2009. Mr. Haji Khan was a former salt and wool trader from a village near Kargil in Ladakh who moved to Skardu in 1949. He had become a relatively wealthy man due to his trading business, but things had changed in the course of Partition. The Gilgit Scouts and other local guerrillas and platoons from Baltistan and Chitral took control of the Kargil areas in 1948 but later had to retreat further north following the ceasefire of 1 January 1949. Mr. Haji Khan then decided to move to the Pakistani-controlled area because he feared for the future of his only son and also because the leaders of the Scouts had warned him of the risk to his family once the Indian army gained control of the area. His family had collaborated with the liberation forces, giving them food supplies including wheat and animals. His parents, however, believed that things would remain the same whether they lived under a Pakistani or an Indian government:

I moved from my village with my wife and son to the Nubra Valley and then I entered in Khaplu by traversing the Chorbit Valley. The Government was providing rations for us. Then, I came to Skardu in 1949. After the division, I came to know that the Indian army took my parents to Saspol as prisoners [for their role as collaborators]. The soldiers said they would forgive them upon the condition they stay there and not return to their former village, to which my parents agreed. In Saspol there was a bridge and two Indian companies of fifty soldiers were posted at both ends. One of the officers told my parents, who were accompanied by two of my sister's children, to cross the bridge. They stayed there one day in the middle without moving. Finally, the officers said that since they had collaborated with the Pakistanis, they were not forgiving them and opened fire from both sides.⁵³

The ceasefire line gradually became more militarized, but some people could still move around, particularly those living in the recently established border areas who knew the mountain passes. The insights I gathered from those living near the LoC between Azad Jammu and Kashmir and the Kashmir Valley and between Baltistan and Ladakh indicate that it was still possible to cross the border until the early 1990s, but thereafter it became very risky.⁵⁴ The border has enforced separation

53 Interview with Mr. Haji Khan, Skardu, 4 September 2009.

54 I refer to the crossing of ordinary civilians. Militants and some people continued to go back and forth in the Kashmir Valley and AJK, but at the expense of their own lives. Border crossing between Kargil and Ladakh after the 1990s was only anecdotal. This notwithstanding, the LoC has been quite successful in impeding movement.

over time and new spaces have been created. Under international law, the status quo concerning the Kashmir dispute is to be maintained until a solution is reached, and the UN Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) is responsible for monitoring the ceasefire. The reality on the ground, however, is that this status quo does not exist, because circumstances have changed.

Over time, the governments of India and Pakistan have followed different strategies to integrate the areas under their control.⁵⁵ After independence, the Indian National Congress (INC)-led government became immersed in the politics of Jammu and Kashmir, seeking integration of the territories as part of the republic through Article 370 of the Indian Constitution. The Delhi Agreement of 24 July 1952 envisioned the possibility of granting this region a semi-independent status, but the government in New Delhi gradually sought to equate Jammu and Kashmir with the Indian states in terms of administration. Despite this apparent integration, administrative differences persisted for decades inside Jammu and Kashmir that evidenced its precarious political context. For example, Ladakh remained closed to the outside world until the mid-1970s.⁵⁶

Pakistan's dealings with the Kashmir areas under its control, known at present as Gilgit-Baltistan and AJK, have revolved around two contradictory issues: the need to administer the territories already held, while at the same time persisting in the claim to the whole princely state. On the one hand, the Pakistani authorities opted to maintain the status quo of these former parts of the princely state, with the view that a plebiscite would be held according to UN resolutions. This meant the continuation of the colonial administration in Gilgit-Baltistan until the early 1970s. This path was also followed to a lesser extent in AJK despite the fact that it has its own constitution as a semi-independent state. On the other hand, the Pakistani administration had to respond to the immediate need to administer these territories, implying a gradual challenging of the alleged status quo.

Furthermore, Gilgit-Baltistan and AJK were territorially discontinuous and lacked significant historical interactions. No direct road linked these territories either. The leadership of the Pakistani Government in Karachi had little knowledge about the situation in the north-east and initially sought to integrate Baltistan into the then North-West Frontier Province.

55 Both India and Pakistan are administering the provisional territories under their control and the UNMOGIP still monitors the ceasefire along the LoC.

56 Aggarwal, *Beyond Lines*, 97.

Later, Pakistan placed Gilgit-Baltistan and AJK under the administration of the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs and Northern Areas. Header Shah, who personally witnessed the events in Skardu after the area came under Pakistan's control, referred to an episode in which the first Political Agent in Baltistan took the fingerprints of some local men so that he could submit a petition in their names reflecting popular support for joining the *sarhad* (the Frontier province). For this purpose, the agent organized the flight in an airplane to Peshawar of eleven local men from several places in Baltistan. Header Shah was one of those men. According to his testimony, once in Peshawar, the men were meant to present heroic testimony of what they had done in favour of joining Pakistan by liberating their territory from the Dogras and promote the idea of their region joining the Frontier.⁵⁷ However, the men were never informed about this latter intention. At the same time, the Azad Kashmir Muslim Conference leader Chowdary Ghulam Abbas unsuccessfully approached the representatives of these northern territories to join AJK.⁵⁸ Both of these episodes provide evidence that the Pakistani Government was unsure about what to do about the political status of Gilgit-Baltistan: had the area become part of the Frontier province, its former legal links with the princely state would have been severed.

Contrary to the official narrative of maintaining the status quo of the Kashmir-related territories, the Pakistani governments in the first two decades after independence gradually took different legal approaches towards AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan. Whereas AJK was recognized as a federal territory with its own constitution, though controlled by Pakistan, Gilgit-Baltistan was governed from the centre, maintaining the British colonial policy until 1973, when Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's reforms granted the area limited self-administration and removed the judicial and tax powers that local rulers had exercised until then.⁵⁹ Bhutto's reforms also introduced an important change in the citizenship status of the residents of Gilgit-Baltistan by suppressing the 'Subject rule'. The Subject rule legally bound individuals as subjects of the princely state. It applied to those who were 'State subjects' of Jammu and Kashmir before 1947, and was continued in AJK and Indian Kashmir. The measure recognized the fact that the Pakistani

57 Interview, Haider Shah, Skardu, March 2010. This account coincides with the view that officers in the Pakistani Government believed that these territories could be better administered from the Frontier. See also Snedden, *Untold Story*, 92.

58 Snedden, *Untold Story*, 92.

59 Kreutzmann, 'Kashmir and the Northern Areas', 209-210; Mato Bouzas, 'Mixed legacies', 873.

Government maintained that some parts of Gilgit-Baltistan – notably the various sub-districts of Gilgit such as Hunza and Nagar – had acceded to Pakistan, whereas other territories (presumably Baltistan) were disputed. The removal of the Subject rule implied a change from the commitment ‘to maintain the status quo’ because it altered the relationship of membership between people and a territory (Kashmir), and did not propose an alternative.⁶⁰ After its lifting, some parts of the Pakistan Citizenship Act, 1951, were implemented – for administrative purposes and for the processing of passports – but people were denied basic rights, such as participating and being elected in the Pakistani general elections, and the right to appeal to the High Court of Pakistan.

Interestingly, until the early 1970s the Indian and Pakistani governments made similar differentiations in the administration of their respective territories. They distinguished between AJK and the Kashmir Valley, territories with some degree of formal self-government, and those in the ‘remote’ north-eastern corners, such as Gilgit-Baltistan and Ladakh, which faced more intense intervention (administrative and military) by the central governments.⁶¹ The control of Ladakh and Gilgit-Baltistan in the first decades after Partition shares some features with colonial rule in terms of restricting access to the frontier areas. As mentioned above, Ladakh was closed to international visitors until the mid-1970s.⁶² Similarly, until the early 1970s Gilgit-Baltistan was ruled under the colonial Frontier Crimes Regulation (FRC), a legal instrument also applied in other Tribal Areas of Pakistan.⁶³ Remote, economically backward, and ‘culturally diverse’ (i.e., tribal), the territories of Ladakh and Gilgit-Baltistan were considered vulnerable and

60 The inhabitants ceased to be subjects of the Jammu and Kashmir princely state but did not become Pakistani citizens.

61 The legal-political context of Ladakh and Gilgit-Baltistan within India and Pakistan are different but some features are shared by both territories. Much against the interests of Ladakhi leaders, Ladakh territory has been administratively preserved as part of the state of Jammu & Kashmir, whereas Gilgit-Baltistan formed its own that was an entity directly controlled from Islamabad under the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs and Northern Areas (at present the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan).

62 Ravina Aggarwal points out that after Nehru’s visit to Ladakh three major conceptual frameworks followed in the policies dealing with the territory, namely: its strategic importance for India’s territorial integrity, the area’s backwardness, and its cultural diversity as linked to India’s plural traditions. *Beyond Lines*, 38–39.

63 For an understanding of the implications and mechanisms under which the FRC evolved and its application to the territories in the North-West Frontier of British India, see the excellent article by Hopkins, ‘Frontier Crimes Regulation’. On the case of Gilgit-Baltistan, see Kreutzmann, ‘Kashmir and the Northern Areas’; Sökefeld, ‘Colonialism to postcolonial’.

therefore unable to attain self-administration.⁶⁴ Geographical values that function as knowledge about places – such as the prominence of the more populated and economically important broad valleys (Kashmir), plains (Jammu), and adjacent mountains (AJK) compared to the sparsely inhabited and almost ‘barren’ high mountain regions – may have proved determinant in the creation of this distinction.⁶⁵

Over the years, India and Pakistan have gradually incorporated Ladakh and Gilgit-Baltistan respectively, granting them various degrees of autonomy in running their own affairs. As mentioned, Gilgit-Baltistan has been granted its own regional government and administration, but its status differs substantially from the provinces of Pakistan. Similarly, Ladakh saw the creation of the Autonomous Hill Councils in Leh in 1995 and in Kargil in 2003. The demands to become a Union Territory initially came from the Buddhist-majority areas of Leh district, which wanted to be ruled directly from Delhi rather than from Srinagar. Despite the different local contexts of Gilgit-Baltistan and Ladakh, people living in both territories are similarly reluctant to be associated with the *masla-e-Kashmir* (‘Kashmir issue’). In the interviews I undertook in Gilgit-Baltistan, respondents were eager to deny any relationship with AJK or with the ongoing conflict in the Kashmir Valley, underscoring their different historical and cultural trajectories. Other scholars such as Ravina Aggarwal and Mona Bhan have pointed out similar views in Ladakh concerning the dominance of Kashmiri nationalism over minority groups in the state.⁶⁶ In Ladakh, the situation is aggravated by the schism between the less developed Shia Muslim-majority area of Kargil and the Buddhist part of Leh. Despite the fact that in Gilgit-Baltistan and Ladakh there is sentiment favouring closer ties with Pakistan and India, respectively, these countries have been reluctant to agree on territorial modifications that would further alter the unity of ‘Kashmir’.

Moreover, the ‘opening’ of these two marginalized territories to the wider world has been based on an emphasis on development. The developmental approach appears to be a way to reconcile the ‘old’ with the ‘new’ at a gradual pace: to keep traditions and ‘ethnic’ distinctions – relevant to the conversion of these territories into popular tourism spots – while improving people’s living conditions by granting them access to modern facilities such as

64 A different issue is how this cultural diversity or tribalism has been re-appropriated by social groups in these areas to access resources. On Ladakh, see Aggarwal, *Beyond Lines*, 11–13. On Gilgit-Baltistan, see Kreutzmann, ‘Kashmir and the Northern Areas’, 213–214.

65 Aggarwal has described the production of Ladakh’s territory as ‘barren’ in India’s imaginary through films, *Beyond Lines*, Ch. 3.

66 Ibid., 7–9; Bhan, *Counterinsurgency*, 68–69.

running water, power, education, and healthcare. Development activities are supported by both state and local administrations, and NGOs have played a notable role in introducing notions of 'sustainability' and environmental concerns that have accentuated different developmental paths compared to other Kashmir territories. For example, the revitalization of the once-renowned tourist industry in the Kashmir Valley is expressed in numbers, that is, in drawing in as many tourists as possible.⁶⁷ Tourism in Ladakh, on the other hand, is formulated in terms of the quality and preservation of a fragile environment – though Leh has become a large bazaar, and its surroundings are as crowded as Srinagar – and respect for local lifestyles and nature. Similarly, social diversity serves to attract travellers to Gilgit-Baltistan but, significantly, such plurality is absent in the tourism brochures advertising trips to AJK.⁶⁸ The development process contributes to the gradual integration of the less conflict-prone border territories into the realm of the nation, constituting a form of spatial peripheralization within the state borders.⁶⁹

After the division of the princely state, the Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir experienced political instability because of the weakening of its autonomy. Differences arose between the main political party dominating the local scene – the National Conference (NC), which amalgamated the autonomist sentiment and was led by the charismatic leader Sheikh Abdullah⁷⁰ – and the INC ruling in New Delhi, led by Jawaharlal Nehru

67 Helen Pidd, 16, 'Kashmir desperate'. Tourism figures are important because they are connected to discourses of political normalization in the Valley. The obsession with numbers even makes its way into Bollywood films, such as in the case of *Haider*, a film that attempts to show the conflict from a local perspective by adapting Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Just before the closing credits of this film, probably as a sort of relief for the spectator, information appears on the large numbers of tourists visiting the Valley in recent years.

68 In general, AJK suffers from the fact that some of its potential tourist attractions, such as the beautiful Neelum Valley, are located near the LoC and within sight of the Indian army. However, in my interactions on this topic with the Pakistani administration and the AJK tourist department in Muzaffarabad, I noticed that foreign tourism is not particularly welcomed. For an account of the Neelum Valley, see Evans, 'Kashmir: a tale', 40-43.

69 Mato Bouzas, 'Securitization and development'.

70 Sheikh Abdullah rose as a political figure in the opposition movement to the authoritarian maharaja of Kashmir which gained prominence in early 1930s. The movement demanded representative politics and addressed the discrimination towards Muslims at all social levels. He became the Prime Minister of Jammu and Kashmir in March 1948 but was dismissed by the Constitutional Head of the State in 1953 and put in jail until 1964. His position was taken by one of his dissident ministers, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed. Upon his release, the central government acted to prevent him from contesting elections by banning the political organizations which supported him. However, in 1974 he reached an agreement with the Indian Prime Minister Indira

and, after his death, by his daughter Indira Gandhi.⁷¹ Over the course of decades, the central government developed an interventionist policy in Jammu and Kashmir to maintain its ultimate control over the state. This involved sometimes supporting Sheikh Abdullah's opponents, at other times dismissing NC governments, and even occasionally siding with this charismatic leader when it was beneficial. The centre's meddling in the affairs of the state continued with Sheikh Abdullah's successor in the NC, his son Farooq, during the tenure of Rajiv Gandhi in the second half of the 1980s.⁷² Finally, in 1990 Farooq Abdullah resigned as chief minister due to widespread violence and President's Rule was imposed in Jammu and Kashmir, suspending the state's special autonomy, and instituting direct rule by the central government through the Governor.

This history of political interventionism by the Indian state led to a lack of institutional legitimacy that affected the development of the democratic process in Jammu and Kashmir.⁷³ According to Widmalm's analysis, the evolution of Kashmiri nationalism into a widespread violent movement differs substantially from other Indian states with strong regional historical and cultural identities such as Tamil Nadu and West Bengal. Political forces in those states also demanded decentralization and pluralism. However, Widmalm notes, unlike these other Indian states, Jammu and Kashmir's (or more specifically the Kashmir Valley's) location as part of India was challenged

Gandhi by giving up the demand for a plebiscite to be held in Kashmir. The alliance with the Congress Party took him back to power until his death in 1982. He was succeeded by his son, Farooq, following the tradition of South Asian family political dynasties. Although Farooq was never jailed, he became part of the same political game with the central led-Congress Party when his views differed from those in New Delhi and in 1984 he lost power to his brother-in-law. He later resigned after a second term in office in 1990 in the context of the mounting repression by Indian paramilitary forces in Kashmir and would not return to power until 1996.

71 There was a brief interregnum after Nehru's death in 1964, when the party was led by Lal Bahadur Shastri, until 1966, when Indira Gandhi won the elections and assumed power.

72 For an understanding of the relationship between the NC and the Congress-led governments that ruled India during most of this period (except during the Janata Party interregnum of 1977-1979), see Widmalm, *Kashmir in Comparative*, 45-75. For a perspective focused on the figure of Farooq Abdullah, see Singh, *A Tragedy*.

73 Widmalm, *Kashmir in Comparative*, 124-125. This author compares the case with Tamil Nadu, where the central government adopted more conciliatory approaches through concessions and allowed a level of political dissent. Focusing on Indira Gandhi's period in government and acknowledging the pluralist tendencies in India's federal system, Paul Brass also underlines the interventionism of the central government into the states through centralization measures that 'nationalis[e] political issues'. *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 154-155. In the same way, Nirvikar Singh points out the role of India's central government institutions in encouraging conflict in Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir by stressing identity divides. 'Cultural conflict in India', 345-346.

from the very beginning in the political discourse. This challenge lasted at least until the NC dropped the demand for a plebiscite in 1975, but by then it had been appropriated by other forces that distanced themselves from the party, such as the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF). State interventionism in Kashmir can be understood as part of the project of taking over the borders, as in the case of the north-eastern states, and of extending the state's control over people whose loyalty to the state is questionable. As Paul Brass observes, 'The center's interventionist policies in the north-eastern states of Assam, Nagaland, and Mizoram, and in the north-western state of Jammu and Kashmir also contributed to, if they did not directly cause, the intensification of violence in those areas and the rise of a secessionist movement in Kashmir.'⁷⁴ Interventionism by the central government was crucial in triggering conflict in the peripheries and favoured the emergence of autonomist and separatist challenges from the margins of the state. This phenomenon, however, has to be contextualized in terms of a nascent Indian democracy preoccupied with building its own demos and insensitive to the accommodation of dissent. In the state of Jammu and Kashmir, interference by the central government was coupled with the gradual alienation of a section of the society from the established political parties that competed in the political arena. The constant rigging of elections and the forging of political alliances for and against the hegemonic NC, depending on the state of relations with New Delhi, became common practices in Kashmir's so-called democratic process.

In this respect, the 1987 elections, the last before the current conflict began, marked a turning point in the political development of the state. Electoral rigging prevented any possibility that the discontented voices who sought to participate in the democratic process through an umbrella organization called the Muslim United Front (MUF) would be able to articulate their views in the legislative assembly. Shortly after the election, members of this coalition and a number of youths opted to cross the LoC to receive military training in AJK and then return to launch an armed struggle. In the beginning, the insurgent movement was led by the militant branch of the JKLF, a secular leftist organization, whose main cadres were mainly from the lower middle classes, but there were also other groups, such as the Hizbul Mujahideen, which had a pro-Pakistan, Islamist modernist orientation.⁷⁵ As has become widely known, Pakistan's intelligence services had a hand in mobilizing the youth and used them according to their own

⁷⁴ Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 318-319.

⁷⁵ Over the years, the Kashmir armed struggle has been characterized by its factionalism. Armed groups mushroomed and split from the main organizations, some were created by Pakistani or

calculations. They favoured the mushrooming of organizations supporting the merger of the entire Jammu and Kashmir within Pakistan, as well as militant groups that could cause the maximum harm to India's democracy. Groups such as Lashkar-e-Taiba, which has become more active in the Kashmir scene since the mid-1990s, illustrate the case of infiltrating Islamist organizations perpetrating attacks not only in the Kashmir Valley but also in India's mainland.⁷⁶

With the eruption of violence in the late 1980s and widespread chaos in the Valley, the Indian Government reacted by suspending the autonomy of the state, administering it directly from the centre through the governor under the President's Rule. Elections were held again in October 1996, but the emergency rules remained in force, including the massive deployment of paramilitary forces to suppress the unrest. The extraordinary powers granted to the armed forces under the AFSPA (Armed Forces Special Powers Act) have resulted in a regime of impunity characterized by innumerable cases of documented human rights violations against civilians.⁷⁷ Estimates since 1989 put the number of victims between 41,000 (claimed by Indian Government sources) and 70,000 (claimed by Kashmiri human rights organizations), of which some 20,000 were civilians; these numbers do not include an additional few thousand who have disappeared.⁷⁸ Pandit organizations estimate that some 670 Kashmiri Pandits have been killed, and some 80-90 percent of this community abandoned the Valley in the early 1990s.⁷⁹ Some of them were threatened, while others left in what seem to have been organized operations by the Indian administration to give an identitarian character to the conflict.⁸⁰ At the time of writing in 2018, the presence of security personnel in the Valley is still overwhelming.

Indian agencies for various purposes, and others were formed as part of a reorientation of aims within the fundamentalist organizations in Pakistan that also operated in Afghanistan.

76 On the history of Lashkar-e-Taiba, see Zahab, 'Door of paradise', 133-158.

77 Duschinski, 'Regimes of impunity', 117-121.

78 Jacob and Naqshbandi, '41,000 deaths'. These figures by government sources are an indication. Earlier in 2008, Indian authorities estimated 47,000 deaths as a result of nearly two decades of insurgency. Sayeed and Cameron-Moore, 'India revises'. The estimated death toll provided by militant organizations is higher than that given by government sources. However, human rights groups in Kashmir such as Jammu Kashmir Civil Society Coalition (JKCSC), which have documented the violence in the Valley, put the number of deaths around 70,000. See for example the report, JKCSC, 'Facts under ground: a fact-finding mission on nameless graves & mass graves in Uri area', 2.

79 See Bashir, '670 KPs killed'.

80 For a specific account on the condition of the Kashmiri Pandits during the conflict, see Evans, 'A Departure', 19-37. Evans discusses the case of the Pandits' exodus from the Valley and

The militarization of the Kashmir Valley, as Kazi has demonstrated, was not only meant to deal with security (of borders and the curbing of militancy within) but also to carefully monitor civilians.⁸¹ The militarization has essentially been an occupation of urban and rural space. The paramilitary forces have barracks in specific locations that have been deemed strategic, have taken over hotels, post offices, and village areas, and have erected their posts next to schools and hospitals. This 'security establishment' – elements of the army, intelligence agencies, and the police – has been responsible for creating a context of social degeneration and suspicion. By using militants who have surrendered or renegades as part of counter-insurgency operations, and by developing their own interests in the conflict, these security actors have ended up acting as gangsters and themselves becoming a source of insecurity. This latter point is illustrated in Adrian Levy and Cathy Scott-Clark's *The Meadow*, an investigative journalistic account of the kidnapping of six foreign tourists in 1995 by a group named *al-Faran*. *Al-Faran* was linked to Pakistani Sunni fundamentalism and its intention was to bring the conflict to international attention, as well as to force the release of well-known militants in Indian jails.⁸² Although the Kashmir police were closely monitoring the militants and kidnappers at some stages and could have intervened, the data provided in the account suggests that this was not in the interests of the Indian security and intelligence agencies. The latter, according to the narration, seemed to be more keen to show the brutality of the militant groups to the international media. This investigative report provides a good depiction of the stateless character of the Indian state in Kashmir, which acts like just another gang or militant group among the many militant groups operating in the Valley, pursuing its own interests.

Militarization in the Kashmir Valley has coexisted with political normalization since 2004, when the India-Pakistan dialogue process that resulted in the opening of the LoC for the first time since Partition, although in a very limited way, was initiated. The relaxation of the border regime aimed to transform the conflict-prone character of the Kashmir Valley into a more conciliatory and peaceful one. At the time, the number of violent attacks had significantly diminished compared to the 1990s.⁸³ As a sign of normalization, travel to the Kashmir Valley was encouraged by both

suggests that there has not been Government involvement. For a different view, see Rai, 'Making a part inalienable', 250-278, 272-273.

81 Kazi, *Between Democracy*.

82 Levy and Scott-Clark, *The Meadow*.

83 See the annual reports of the Ministry of Home Affairs on violent episodes in Jammu and Kashmir, <https://mha.gov.in/documents/annual-reports>.

state and Indian authorities, as evidenced in a number of schemes such as holiday bonuses and incentives for bureaucrats, relatives of members of the security forces, and others. Furthermore, the development of the tourism industry called for major interventions in the Valley for the building and upgrading of infrastructure, with the intention of making Kashmir an all-season tourist destination.

The oft-heard slogan 'going back to normal' that became popular afterwards is generally understood as returning to the pre-insurgency context of the 1980s. This means returning to a period when manifest conflict was absent. However, as one of my interviewees, an artist of Kashmiri origin residing in Delhi, pointed out when I asked him whether the situation was improving after the dialogue process: 'The situation there was never normal. What is normal? There is a dispute. The tourism business is clearly to make Kashmiris dependent on it for their income. It is like the carrot and the stick: either you behave or we will cut the flow.'⁸⁴ Other people with whom I spoke expressed similar views, both those who sympathized with the Kashmiri cause and those who did not – including a businesswoman in her mid-sixties from a long-established Dogra family living in Srinagar who related the increase in 'tourism' to the 'good behaviour of Kashmiris' (in this case, read as Kashmiri Muslims), meaning that they were behaving better so they were getting tourists. The policy of normalcy, which attempts to maintain that the Kashmir Valley was once a 'normal place', constitutes an attempt to depoliticize the dispute by transforming people's interactions in a place, thus transforming the Kashmir space. The idea is that Kashmir, with all of its own cultural and landscape singularities, is a 'normal' state of the Indian Union. In other words, normalization is a form of territorializing the borderland to convert it into an integral part of the state's space.

Conclusion

Representing the Kashmir dispute in the form of a map – as the territory of the former princely state torn between India and Pakistan – conveys the idea of a pre-existing cohesive territorial entity that never was. Maps of the princely state and those depicting the disputed territories between India and Pakistan reinforce the idea of territorial contiguity and cultural and social homogeneity over fragmentation and disruption. The Jammu Dogras ruled the princely state for a little over a century and were able to develop

84 Interview, Delhi, October 2014.

a degree of connectivity through communication and economic networks that linked the different territories with the centre in the Kashmir Valley and Jammu. However, they ruled by maintaining significant differentiation between recently conquered areas and their core territories of the Kashmir Valley and Jammu. While indirect rule and feudal forms prevailed at the time of Partition in what is now Gilgit-Baltistan and Ladakh, the articulation of a popular political mobilization in the Kashmir Valley in the early decades of the twentieth century, through political clashes and negotiations with the Dogra rulers, resulted in the emergence of limited spaces for political participation. The fact that the term 'Kashmir' refers to the dispute between India and Pakistan and to the nationalist struggle in the Kashmir Valley has often led to an idea of a consolidated colonial entity that serves as the framework against which present developments are examined, highlighting the criteria of territorial contiguity – the territorial integrity of the former princely state over its partitioned history – and the region's multiethnic character, against which the aspirations of Kashmiris from the Valley are considered. These perspectives privilege the state-making process resulting from decolonization from a centre-state point of view rather than examining the territorialization processes that took place in these territories during the colonial and postcolonial periods, which can help in understanding local people's differing perceptions of the whole Kashmir question.

2 Conceptualizing a Borderland Approach to Kashmir

Abstract

The literature on the study of borderlands highlights their importance for the construction of difference and therefore the understanding of international reality. The Kashmir borderland is often depicted as a global hotspot, and the Line of Control (LoC) enjoys a mystical character as a fracture which is denied by India, Pakistan, and nationalist groups. On the ground, however, ongoing bordering processes on both sides of the LoC are evidence of attempts to bring this area under state control and, in so doing, end the possibility of articulating its social diversity in more inclusive political terms. Bordering processes follow the logic of state spatiality in which borderlands are deemed not to exist.

Keywords: Borderland approach, security discourses, bordering processes, political spaces, state space

This chapter examines what is commonly referred to as the borderland in the Kashmir context and the epistemological consequences of this conceptualization. It focuses on the border spaces on both sides of the LoC and the conditions for political life there. Borderlands have been broadly defined as zones *located* on both sides of an international border (the edge) where the social dynamics are largely affected by the existence of this border, which regulates interactions between the two sides.¹ Borders are institutions; they are the result of multiple activities of government and thus people's interactions have to be considered within the constraints of these institutions.² As institutions, they produce norms that regulate

¹ See Martínez, *Border People*, 5-25; Newman, 'Resilience of conflict', 108; Van Schendel, *Bengal Borderland*, 8-9.

² Brunet-Jailly, *Comparing Border*, 3.

social actions within a specific space, even in contexts where borders are contested – which brings up the question of enforcement.³ Although borders are relatively persistent and stable over time, the norms that regulate them are continuously challenged from outside (i.e., by grassroots-level movements) or from within the state, leading to the border's transformation.⁴ The border creates the borderland, in which the rupture caused by the border is 'stitched together' again through new societal arrangements and processes.

The borderland

Borderlands have commonly been examined through the lens of the state's periphery: they are considered to have evolved from a process of territorialization in which the areas known as borderlands end up on the edges of power centres.⁵ This spatial perspective implies an epistemology of the study of borderlands as peripheries, based on the pre-eminence of the nation-state as a normative category. Consequently, this perspective has considered the histories and social processes of these border zones within the frame of the state territorial container.⁶ Van Schendel, in his work on the Bengal borderland, proposes a shift in this perspective: to take borderlands themselves as the units of analysis, if only as a 'powerful corrective to the current territorialization and state-centricity of the social imagination.'⁷ This shift implies, among others, highlighting social processes taking place *in* these territories by giving them centrality – a scholarly priority that helps rescale wider social phenomena but at the same time invites thorough theoretical reflection. This does not mean that we should take territorial borderlands as more or less bounded centres *per se* (as specific entities), but that we should instead scrutinize the bordering processes in these territories and how the affected cope with them, in order to explain the spatial politics at work in the construction of difference.

Borderlands have also been investigated as blurred zones in legal-constitutional terms, for their social diversity, and in relation to multiple spatial interactions. A political science approach assumes that the study of borderlands involves questioning the spatial power hierarchies that shape

3 Hogson, 'What are institutions?', 13-15.

4 Newman, 'Resilience of conflict', 102.

5 For disciplinary approaches to the study of borderlands, see: Donnan and Wilson, *Borders: Frontiers*, 43-62.

6 Van Schendel, *Bengal Borderland*, 8-9.

7 *Ibid.*, 9.

the interpretation of international realities, particularly in relation to the study of conflicts and the predominance of the state over other forms of the spatial organization of political life. It also implies breaking down how conflict is manifested in these territories, in the sense that conflict is usually not pervasive and equally distributed across the society. As blurred zones, borderlands are considered 'anomalies' with regard to their failure to fit into the spatial hierarchies associated with methodological nationalism. This is because of the difficulty that nationalism experiences in the handling of social diversity and its legitimization of violence in border zones on behalf of state-making processes. For these reasons, the study of borderlands has to operate within the paradox of their condition as spaces without a right to exist as political entities themselves, although international processes cannot be understood without the existence of these spaces.

Since borderlands *are not only located* within but also born out of a territorialization process, this implies taking into account the nation-state building that has produced a degree of differentiation from an 'other'. Hence borderlands ultimately constitute instances of or 'contexts' for spatial transformation where the resulting interactions can be read as a process of 'becoming' rather than of 'being'.⁸ Looking at the map of Kashmir's disputed territories, the first image that catches one's attention is that of encirclement – a territory almost completely squeezed between international borders, some demarcated, others disputed. But the map also demonstrates ruptures through the compartmentalization of the divided territories. The disputed LoC separating India-controlled and Pakistan-controlled Kashmir has also divided the Pakistan-controlled AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan, not only physically (there is no direct communication link between the two regions), but also administratively.⁹ Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan have a different constitutional status and are not integrated in Pakistan. Further fragmentation can also be seen in India's claims to the Aksai Chin (under China) and to the border territories ceded to China in the Sino-Pakistan Agreement of 1963, all of which were previously part of the princely state. People in the Kashmir Valley claim the centrality of the Valley as part of the entire Kashmir region (the formerly princely state) in terms of a connecting zone, not only to India and Pakistan through existing land routes, but also to China in the memories of trade caravans, Tajikistan through renewed religious exchanges, and even

8 Paasi, "Borderless world", 218.

9 Although there was never a direct road linking the two regions, before 1947 travel between the two was possible through the Valley via Srinagar, through Astore, to Gilgit.

Afghanistan in the connecting possibilities of the Wakhan Corridor.¹⁰ From time to time the Pakistani press publishes articles in favour of the connection of northern Pakistan with Central Asia through Wakhan, although this project has not yet materialized.¹¹ Hence, despite the context of encirclement and fragmentation there are continuing demands for interconnectedness that shape an understanding of the region based on the Kashmir Valley's centrality and proximity to a number of other places.

The encirclement of Kashmir is manifested in the limited (or sometimes non-existent) movement across borders and accentuated by the generally hostile relations between the nation-states, most notably India and Pakistan. The unsettled status of the LoC and the disputed Sino-Indian border exacerbate the problem of insecurity because there is a lack of information about what is happening at the border. This situation renders the entire area prone to conspiracy theories.¹² For example, Hermann Kreutzmann has addressed events in Gilgit-Baltistan in detail, concluding, 'it becomes obvious that outside interests and sponsorships are stimulating a conflict and battle for stakes in Gilgit-Baltistan'.¹³ Similar views are shared by Nooshin Ali concerning the issue of sectarian violence and development in the region within the context of the so-called War on Terror.¹⁴

In 2012, for example, several Indian and international newspapers, including *The New York Times*, reported on the suspicious large presence of Chinese soldiers in Gilgit-Baltistan – news that could easily have been questioned if someone had bothered to travel to the area or consult an independent local source.¹⁵ The information was false: the relatively few Chinese workers employed on the widening of the Karakoram highway (KKH), whom I first

10 See Rizvi, *Trans-Himalayan Caravans*; Kreutzmann, *Wakhan Quadrangle*, 205-207; Mato Bouzas, 'Space(s) and place(s)'. On ties with Tajikistan, see Maqbool, 'Strong bond'. The opening of the Wakhan Corridor to trade is an issue in Gilgit-Baltistan, as stated in the unpublished document (provided on 9 September 2009) 'Economic Proposals for the Development of the Northern Areas' by Shehbaz Khan, Chairman and Founder President of the Northern Areas Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Gilgit. The opening of the Wakhan Corridor was also mentioned in an interview with several members of the Kashmir Chamber of Commerce in Srinagar, 5 May 2010.

11 *Pamir Times*, 'Connect Pakistan'; Javeed, 'Wakhan corridor'.

12 This is reflected not only in the widespread rumors that constantly emerge in local everyday life and that have an international dimension, as I have noticed in a number of interviews and conversations, but also in international news about the region that emerges from time to time. See Randeep, 'Chinese troops'; Harrison, 'China's discreet hold'; Kreutzman, 'Boundaries and space', 285-288.

13 Kreutzmann, 'Boundaries and space', 285-288.

14 Ali, 'Books vs bombs'.

15 Certainly Indian journalists probably do not have easy access to Gilgit-Baltistan, but perhaps somebody independent could travel to the region.

saw in August 2009, were mostly escorted by Pakistani police, and this did not change in the following years. The intentions of propagating such false news have not been disclosed, but this shows the state of the security paranoia over events in the area. Security in the Kashmir borderland is not only about managing the current context of uncertainty, but also about preventing transformations that are considered undesirable from the state security's point of view. Conspiracies still occur where there is a lack of normal flow of information in the era of Google Earth.

Adding to, or perhaps precisely because of, the amount of conspiracies in the area, the Kashmir borderland is wrapped in a halo of mysticism to the extent that India and Pakistan tacitly agree that the actual division (the LoC) is not represented on official maps. Indeed, the representation of the disputed area is subject to controversies in both India and Pakistan. It is not uncommon for Pakistani maps to show the whole of Kashmir (including the parts under Indian control) as belonging to Pakistan or disputed, while Indian maps invariably depict Gilgit-Baltistan and AJK as Indian areas. The pupils of one school in Kargil that I visited in 2012 were learning from maps that the border was distant, and that the whole of Gilgit-Baltistan was part of India, despite knowing from their daily life experiences that the LoC was only some 10 km away. In Baltistan on the Pakistani side, a teacher involved in teacher training explained to me that students in public schools followed the curriculum of the Punjab Textbook Board, so they would not learn about local geography and culture. It seems that those most affected by the conflict are not allowed to know about the intricacies of what is at stake.

In May 2011 *The Economist* published an article about India and Pakistan's rivalry in Kashmir, showing a map in which the disputed area was divided between the two countries. In India, this map was censored by covering it with a blank sticker. However, the magazine's cover had a cartoon depicting the border, under the title 'The world's most dangerous border' (Image 2.1), but this was left untouched. The censoring shows how important maps, unlike a cartoon depiction showing the same space, are for depicting understandings of reality that are considered sacred, as if they were depicting a sacred space. The same idea can be seen in the reluctance to represent the fracture (the LoC). Instead of acknowledging the actual division on the ground, this non-representation and deliberate confusion helps to sustain the conspiracy-prone character of the Kashmir borderland, a global hotspot in the sense that the situation may suddenly turn worse at any time. The mystical character of the region encompasses not only the LoC but also the surrounding areas, making these territories into places that are devoid of empirical and rational knowledge.

Image 2.1 Cover of *The Economist*, 9 May 2011



Reproduced with permission

Image 2.2 Border area on the Indian side, Kargil



Photograph by Antía Mato Bouzas

Image 2.3 Border area in Kargil, showing part of the Kargil-Skardu road

The shrine of Sher Ali is located at the rear on the top of the hill and Brolmo village is located below it.



Photograph by Antía Mato Bouzas

Observation of the LoC on the ground, from a nearby area, shows a different picture. On the one hand, the border character of the LoC is strongly present in the landscape: the threatening militarized aspect can be seen from the large army camps that are spread everywhere, including very remote areas, and also in the way the military interferes in civilian life at the border.¹⁶ On the other hand, an element of empathy for the ‘other’ exists at the border alongside an irremediable acceptance of the state of things. At the time of my research visit in May 2012, a lone soldier (a young Assamese man) stationed on the road to India’s last village in the district of Kargil, located around 3 km before no-man’s land, had no particular animosity towards ‘the Pakistanis’, he said, and was instead focused on his role of controlling and protecting his position (Image 2.2). Similarly, an aged woman, a farmer from a village on the Indian side from where it is possible to see the impermanently inhabited village of Brolmo some 6-7

¹⁶ Bhan, *Counterinsurgency*.

km away on the Pakistani side, spoke of her interest in the whereabouts of those living in Brolmo because 'they were the same'. Despite describing how happy she was in India because her husband and son worked in the local administration, she was still worried about her neighbours on the other side of the LoC. The village was within sight (Image 2.3) and she could see that its inhabitants sometimes visited the nearby shrine of Sher Ali or tended their fields during the sowing and harvesting seasons. Moreover, Indian soldiers stationed nearby shared information with those on the Indian side about their neighbours across the LoC. Observing the border at the border, the threatening image of the army fails to deter instances of humanity emerging at the local level.¹⁷ At the border it seems clear that the sense of insecurity emerges from elsewhere and that measures to tackle this insecurity are imposed upon these border areas.

Governments sitting in distant places – such as New Delhi, Islamabad, and even Washington – alongside media, and also sections of academia represent the border space as a security domain. Such representations of space are manifested locally as a sort of irony, as the impossibility of these places on both sides of the LoC of being or becoming something different. This can be exemplified in the road that once connected Kargil and Skardu: while its closure prevents the communication of those living on both sides who want to maintain ties, it continues to allow the circulation of jeeps from the international monitoring team of the UNMOGIP ceasefire observers. Created by the United Nations Security Council's resolution 47 (1948) to monitor the ceasefire, the UNMOGIP is partially a relic of the past, without legal relevance once the UN ceased to be involved in the dispute, but one that keeps highlighting the 'international dimension' of these territories. The image of UNMOGIP jeeps travelling along a road from which those inhabiting the border areas are banned shows the contrast between the representation of space by international actors and the experience of those who are represented by others and prevented from speaking for themselves.

Those living on both sides of the LoC are unable to meet across the nearby border; the few who can afford it manage to travel (after lengthy bureaucratic processes) to the other side via international flights or by the land route by crossing the international India-Pakistan border at Wagah/Attari. The border suppresses the idea of 'local' or 'domestic' space and strengthens the international dimension as a space of separation. People need to go to Delhi, Islamabad, Amritsar, or Lahore to make their way to locations on the other side of the LoC that could easily be reached within 2-3 hours by road, and

17 Mato Bouzas, 'Space(s) and place(s)', 98-99.

this movement is mediated and regulated by bureaucrats living in those distant cities. The exclusion of the 'local' and the 'domestic' in the provision of security and the embracement of the international – which can only occur through third-party mediation instead of a dialogue between the concerned parties – acts as a reminder of the postcolonial condition of these territories.

Border roads: the contours of making state space

Borders completely permeate life in the Kashmir divided territories. In the summers of 2010, 2011, and 2012, I travelled the route from Srinagar to Leh three times. During my first visit in May 2010, I recall the presence of Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) soldiers stationed at intervals along the route from Srinagar to the vicinity of Sonamarg. At the time, the situation in the Kashmir Valley was very tense because of the increasing force of the stone-pelting movement in Srinagar and other major towns. Teenage boys, emulating the Palestinian Intifada, were venting their frustration by attacking the Indian paramilitary with stones after Friday prayers and by using the tactics of street guerrillas in their escape through the narrow alleys and courtyards of the Kashmiri old towns' typical urban architecture. The revolt was a response to several incidents in the winter and spring of that year in which Kashmiri teenage boys were killed by the CRPF and the Border Security Force (BSF).¹⁸ The Indian authorities were preoccupied with the situation and the governor N.N. Vohra had pressured influential Kashmiris to denounce the stone-pelting movement.¹⁹ The city of Srinagar, itself militarized and temporarily divided by checkpoints and barbed wire during curfews, symbolizes the pervasiveness of fragmentation in the region.

While travelling by bus from Srinagar to Kargil and observing the continued presence of soldiers stationed along the roadside, it was difficult to figure out whether the paramilitary were deployed to protect and control the road, and the terrain in general, from a possible attack, or to monitor

¹⁸ See Kak, *Until my Freedom*, Introduction.

¹⁹ The stone-pelting movement became a tense issue for the Indian authorities in 2010–2011. I interviewed Maulana Showkat, leader of the Alh-e-Hadith, at his office in Srinagar on 12 May 2010 and discussed the issue. He was opposing stone-pelting (which was openly supported by the Jamaat-e-Islami). At the time, there were some changes in the nationalist camp of the Hurriyat, and Maulana's attitude was seen as sympathetic to India. This and other related issues may have caused his assassination in early April 2011. In meetings with a few Kashmiri intellectuals, I have been told of the pressure from the Indian Government to condemn the stone-pelting but, irrespective of their views, a public stand against the movement would be problematic for them.

the nearby rural areas and people. At some points, paramilitary personnel of the CRPF were posted in front of a row of shops, almost unnoticed by the passers-by, while in other cases, they were standing next to a tree in the countryside, or posted under a rock to cope with the inconveniences of a rainy day. One sight caught my attention before reaching the town of Ganderbal, when the bus made a short stop owing to the traffic. Through the window I saw a soldier posted under a tree close to a few houses in the countryside. A middle-aged woman was passing near him with a cow, probably taking it to the fields. How should I interpret this situation? Was she intimidated by his presence? It was remarkable how everyday life could carry on in a sparsely populated hamlet with an armed soldier overseeing the inhabitants' everyday activities – even if he was not posted there for that purpose.

This picture draws our attention to how borders as security markers are inscribed on people's bodies; they embody a specific rationality that implies a disciplinary character, in the Foucauldian sense. Borders are 'dispositives', following Giorgio Agamben's definition: 'that in which, and through which, one realizes a pure activity of government devoid of any function in the being.'²⁰ Borders penetrate the sphere of intimacy, and through this contact new sets of power relations are created. It is not rare in the Kashmir Valley to hear stories about the atmosphere of constant distrust because of the presence of 'informants' and 'collaborators' of the police and military, as well as a preoccupation with issues of morality and domination in cases of local women involved in love affairs with security forces personnel. These stories are told to explain the 'dehumanized' context created by the conflict, in which it is no longer possible to distinguish between 'friends' and 'foes,' 'we' and 'they', and where people (even within family networks) cannot trust each other.²¹ They also provide an understanding of the difficulty of clearly differentiating between parties in the conflict, since certain groups are seen as having second thoughts or being 'Indian' or 'Pakistani' agents and thus being unreliable. Part of this reality has been portrayed in the popular Bollywood film *Haider*, a free adaptation of Hamlet to the Kashmir context in which the family drama of treachery is extended to the society in the Kashmir Valley.²² Examining the border on the ground,

20 Agamben, *What is an Apparatus?*, 11.

21 Paasi, *Territories, Boundaries*, 12-16.

22 *Haider* (2014) is a Bollywood movie directed by Vishal Bhardwaj. He and the Kashmiri author Basharat Peer wrote the script. The story is an adaptation of Hamlet to the context of Kashmir and this is mostly reflected in the biography of the main character. However, the film was made for Indian public consumption and, setting aside its merit in representing the

it is possible to conclude that, more than differentiating between 'we' and 'they' as border studies scholars point out, borders destroy the basic sense of 'togetherness' or 'bondness' – thus making any 'we' or 'they' no longer workable as a uniform category. This can be seen in conflict zones such as Kashmir, but also in Chechnya.²³

Continuing with the journey, close to Sonamarg, Hindu pilgrims from Jammu and other parts of India confront the last leg of the Amarnath yatra (Image 2.4).²⁴ Sonamarg is also a popular tourist spot owing to its natural beauty and proximity to Srinagar. The importance of these spaces is reflected on the landscape. Suddenly, advertisements for vegetarian restaurants and hotels with Hindu names replace the signs in Urdu and Muslim names that had dominated the earlier parts of the route. Restaurants and hotels are there to cater to pilgrims' and mainly Hindu tourists' needs. Many of their owners are from Jammu and move in the summer season to this area to earn a living. This activity at this point of the road coincides with the presence of signs at different points of the road – more numerous after the town of Ganderbal in 2012 than in May 2010 – containing warnings for the pilgrims and indicating that the army was there to protect them. Pilgrims to Amarnath have been attacked during periods of widespread violence in the Valley, mainly by groups with a base in Pakistan, such as in the attack in July 2017 by Lashkar-e-Taiba. Kashmiri nationalists have either been indifferent to these attacks or have called for pilgrims to be treated with respect and hospitality.²⁵ Even militant groups rooted in the Valley – that is, Kashmiri militants such as Hizbul Mujahideen – have publicly stated that

fracture that the conflict has created in the Kashmir society, it takes this argument about the treachery among Kashmiris to depoliticize the overwhelming role of the Indian state (through its agencies) in dividing Kashmiri society. To admit that conflicts such as the one in the Kashmir Valley or Chechnya have almost annihilated existing bonds in the society, to the extent that people do not trust each other, does not imply subscribing to the idea that they are not victims and ignoring the role of the state in creating this situation.

23 Politkovskaya, *Nothing but the Truth*.

24 The Amarnath yatra is a pilgrimage held every spring to the remote cave of Amanarth, located in a mountain area, accessible through Sonamarg and the town of Pahalgam. The Sanskrit term *yatra* refers to the pilgrimage. The Amarnath cave, covered by snow for most of the year, has a big ice stalactite that represents a *lingam*, a symbol worshiped by Hindus as a representation of the energy of the God Shiva. Pilgrims travel by different means to the area and camp there for a short period. The pilgrimage was little known until the 1980s and only around 12,000 pilgrims were visiting the cave at the end of that decade. However, after 1996, the pilgrimage was revived and in 2011, the number of devotees was more than 600,000. There is little doubt that the revival and establishment of new pilgrimage sites is connected to nationalist politics of the Indian state. See Nawlakha, 'Kashmir: state', 17-18; Reader, *Pilgrimage*, 83-85.

25 Bukhari, 'Yatra in full swing'.

pilgrims are not their targets.²⁶ The pilgrimage is also a source of income for local Muslims, who benefit from the event.

These facts notwithstanding, signs on the roadside at the time of my research visit evoked a climate of fear and insecurity. Slogans such as 'Have a safe Amarnath Yatra' and 'We are here to ensure your protection' indicated that pilgrims were taking a risk and needed the army's protection. They also illustrated how the pilgrimage is being used politically, as noted by Ian Reader, who points out that 'Hindu nationalists organizations have encouraged Hindus to participate in the Amarnath pilgrimage as a statement of Hindu pride and in order to reinforce Indian claims to the region.'²⁷ Reader also describes how the Indian Army has been deployed during the pilgrimage season for logistical support.²⁸ As with the representation of the LoC as the 'world's most dangerous border', the security discourse around Amarnath develops somewhere else to advise the traveller of the road's dangers, but still invites him/her to continue the journey under the premise of receiving the army's protection. This is because, without the pilgrims and the 'Hindu space' created in Kashmir's 'Muslim' heartland, it is not possible to interfere with and make claims to the territory. In other words, the pilgrimage can be understood as a form of settlement activity that invites further colonization and securitization of this territory.

The dominant security discourse dictates the mechanisms to be implemented depending on how the problem is defined. The border is dangerous and needs to be protected (and militarized); while the pilgrimage may be risky, its continuity should be ensured. The mechanisms used to tackle the security problem have one aim: to transform the local space. They constitute a form of border making in the sense that when an issue is identified as pertaining to the security domain, several material and non-material interventions are carried out to isolate it and deal with it in a differentiated manner.²⁹ For example, government (of India and Kashmir) support for Amarnath and other tourist sites (e.g., Tossamaidan) contrasts with the ban (or severe control) of Muslim religious processions and gatherings, such as the Shia festival of Muharram, which have been prohibited since 1990 in many places in the Kashmir Valley.³⁰ The arguments in favour of supporting and protecting Amarnath and tourism in Kashmir, despite

26 Ashiq, 'Amarnath pilgrims won't be'.

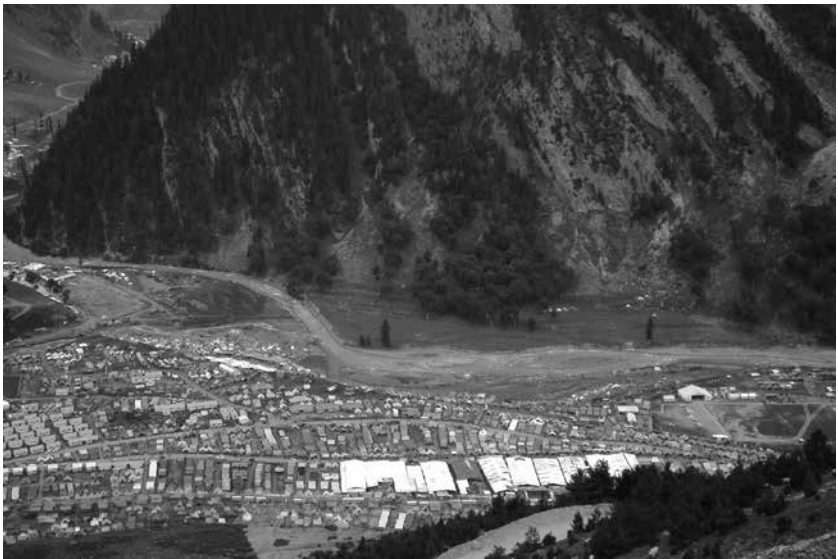
27 Reader, *Pilgrimage*, 42.

28 Ibid., 42.

29 On securitization, see Wæver, 'Securitization and desecuritization', 54-57.

30 Some small processions do occur in majority Shia districts but the main processions, such as the one through the Lal Chowk in Srinagar, have been banned.

Image 2.4 Amarnath, camp area for pilgrims, located next to a military camp



Photograph by Antia Mato Bouzas

Image 2.5 Sign about the Kargil War memorial



Photograph by Antia Mato Bouzas

the fact that it is a conflict zone, are part of a strategy of transforming the Kashmir space, underlining its 'Hindu' relevance, and portraying the region as 'peaceful'. The celebration of Muharram challenges that representation because Muslims do not need protection (from the Indian army), and their religious activities underline the Islamic character of the Kashmir space as opposed to the Indian secular nation. From the state's perspective, then, the celebration of Muharram is a potential source of conflict.

After leaving Sonamarg and heading towards the little-populated area that extends from Dras to Kargil, the military presence in scattered camps announces the proximity of the LoC and the memories of the Kargil War fought in the late spring-summer of 1999. In fact, the sites of the fighting (including an open-air war memorial museum) have been turned into popular attractions, mostly for Indian tourists interested in knowing about the remote confines of the nation (Image 2.5). At the time of the fighting, news of the Kargil War was transmitted to the Indian audience amid a climate of triumphant nationalism.³¹ The conflict drew the attention of the media to these relatively little known and unguarded 'edges' of the nation through the enthusiastic narratives of India's victory by journalists who were able to access the area, which I listened to as a university student in Delhi. The episode symbolized the establishment of the LoC, since it brought attention to the edges (i.e., the control of mountain peaks in the terrain) and marked a new approach towards the border populations. The latter has been analysed in great detail by Bhan in her study of the minority Brokpa villages living close to the LoC. Based on anthropological fieldwork, she demonstrates how development programs following the Kargil War were used as an instrument to co-opt the otherwise untrustworthy border populations.³² Adding to development projects, the post-war boosting of Indian tourism to the area has also constituted a strategy of inscribing Kargil as indisputably Indian.

After leaving Kargil and heading towards Leh, gradually getting further from the LoC, the pervasive Indian military presence continues, but this time it is there to counter a different enemy: China. Travelling along the road from Srinagar to Leh, part of which runs close to the LoC, it is possible to distinguish the borderland, as indicated by the social diversity of these territories and the attempts to control that diversity and transform it into state space. From the road, this appropriation becomes visible through the military control and the transformation of sites and places into valuable

31 Aggarwal, *Beyond Lines of Control*, 219-220.

32 Bhan, *Counterinsurgency*, Ch. 4.

symbols for the nation.³³ The borderland emerges out of a continuous historical process that implies 'conflict and accommodation', as Zutshi has aptly described it, but one which, in the modern version of the postcolonial state, denies borderlanders the possibility of resistance.³⁴ While this process follows the logic that all space must be administered and occupied, it also implies an imposition and has hierarchical connotations. Within this logic, the borderland is a space to be vanished: as James Scott reminds us regarding Zomia (which is a borderland), it belongs to a period in 'which such peripheries are shrunk and beleaguered by the expansion of state power' to ultimately be rendered folkloric remnants.³⁵ Nowhere are these advances of the state more visible than in the Kashmir borderland, where those who seek to oppose the state can only act through the language of the state (claiming a state for themselves such as the Kashmiris from the Kashmir Valley), and other minority groups in the Kashmir Valley and Ladakh (and Gilgit-Baltistan on the Pakistani side) can only become tribes or valuable symbols of sustaining the national diversity.

Travelling along the border roads of Kashmir's disputed territories allows the observation of ongoing dynamics in the border spaces that denote attempts to bring the territories under state control through militarization as well as by changing the character of the area through various interventions, such as the building of infrastructure and the boosting of (Hindu) religious tourism. The transformation of space is an essential activity carried out through physical interventions that can be empirically identified, but at the same time they are framed publicly through a discourse about the insecurity of the area. This security-insecurity paradox – that the Kashmir borderland is dangerous, but militarization brings security; that pilgrims should proceed on their journey, but need to be protected – determines both the uncertainty and the modes of control of the borderland.

Violence, social diversity, and fragmentation

Borderlands have historically been described as zones with the potential to realize the anarchic utopia of freedom, but this rather idealistic vision ignores the historical trajectory of violence and repression by different

33 Rai, 'Making a part'.

34 Zutshi, 'Rethinking Kashmir's History', 604-605.

35 Scott, *The Art of Not Being*, 324.

powers seeking to dominate these areas.³⁶ This historical trajectory has left its imprint in the social and political organization of the border territories that we see today. The British colonial policy on the frontier, which was characterized by brutality and indirect control, continued after the creation of the states of India and Pakistan in 1947. Indeed, traces of these strategies of domination can be still found in the ongoing conflicts in Balochistan, the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), Kashmir's disputed territories, and India's north-eastern states. While the case of Balochistan involves a strong economic component – in the sense that the conflict impinges on state control of an area rich in mineral resources – the other conflicts revolve around the control of the edges of the nation, and are also about their condition as launching pads for border-based foreign politics, as highlighted in the case of Pakistan's involvement in the FATA and AJK.

Moreover, exceptional legal instruments such as the colonial Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR) of 1901 have been in force in parts of Balochistan in the past and in Gilgit-Baltistan until 1974, and they were still the main legal instrument, though amended in 2011, overlooking affairs in FATA until they were removed in 2018.³⁷ FCR involved the codification of customary law, giving power to already-established traditional hierarchical and patriarchal structures, while also appointing an agent of the central government to rule the area. This mechanism has prevented the development of institutions and democratization processes.³⁸ On a different level, the AFSPA, which sustains militarization by giving extra powers of detention, extrajudicial killings, and so on, in Kashmir and parts of the north-eastern states of India, has origins in a British India ordinance of 1942 – implemented to quell the nationalist Quit Indian Movement – which was later incorporated into the legislation of independent India.³⁹ The AFSPA has been in force since 1958 in the state of Manipur and since 1990 in the Kashmir Valley.⁴⁰ It is ironic that a legal instrument created by the colonial power against those fighting for India's independence has been preserved by the Indian leadership to

36 Ibid., 324.

37 The FRC was enacted for the first time in 1872 and amended to make new, more draconian versions in 1887 and 1901. The version from 1901 is the one that has been in operation in parts of Pakistan. See Hopkins, 'Frontier governmentality', 375. The situation of the FRC in FATA remains ambivalent at the time of writing in December 2018. This territory was merged with the KPK province in the end of May, but there is a transition period in which the FRC has been replaced by an Interim Governance Regulation. Marvi Sirmed, 'For FATA residents'.

38 Callen et al., *Ungoverned Space*.

39 A.G. Noorani, 'AFSPA: License to kill'.

40 On the AFSPA in Manipur, see McDuie-Ra, *Borderland City*, 18.

deny that very right of independence to other groups within the nation. Moreover, the AFSPA, as the Indian lawyer A.G. Noorani points out, has also perpetuated the dominance of interests of the army over civilian rule, thus prolonging authoritarianism.⁴¹

While people in the Kashmir disputed territories have been nominally integrated as nationals of the state, they have been excluded from the democratic processes that developed in the main territories of India and Pakistan.⁴² Indeed, their citizenship status is uncertain. The border territories have been 'kept apart' through exceptional legal-administrative arrangements that have prevented the development of a democratic culture and instead favoured authoritarianism. Thus the image of the anarchist utopia that has sometimes been used to describe the pluralism and relative egalitarianism that characterizes some of the world's borderlands has not materialized in Kashmir. Despite the borderlands' potential to provide insights that can lead to the articulation of more inclusive political spaces, there is also a drive to suppress what is left of this diversity in order to deny the possibility of the borderland's right to exist. Although there are instances of confrontation, the Kashmir border territories still retain a degree of coexistence which is reflected in their human and cultural diversity based on past interactions. The establishment of the LoC has abruptly put an end to such interactions, but research carried out in the border areas shows their continuing importance through memory, the revival of cultural expressions, and the re-enactment of family ties across the LoC. These connectivities underline the character of border towns as crossroads of influences and they also serve as a form of resistance against the marginalization of these locations through their confinement within the borders of state, well before the 'national' made its appearance. Indeed, it is striking that the dialogue process between India and Pakistan, initiated in 2004 to solve the Kashmir dispute, revolves around 'opening' and increasing the 'flexibility' of the LoC based on the, supposedly, rediscovered 'cosmopolitanism' of economic globalization processes.

In fact, it is the social diversity of the borderland – the need for translation as a multilingual place – and the impossibility that it can be defined in existing political terms, that paves the way for alternative forms of political

41 A.G. Noorani, 'AFSPA: License to kill'.

42 Although Pakistan has been ruled by dictators for a long time, I refer here to the fact that both AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan have been continuously controlled by Islamabad through the military and the bureaucracy of the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs, limiting the political freedom of these territories.

life. This has been described by Etienne Balibar in his understanding of a borderland model for Europe as a 'political space imagined in terms of overlapping open regions'.⁴³ Preoccupied with addressing the multiple belonging of migrant communities and their descendants in Europe through the principle of *egalibertè* ('equaliberty'), his model rests on a critique of the continuous reproduction of state space despite transformations in the society that cause new forms of exclusion and inequality. He has also alluded to the Palestine-Israel conflict to demonstrate the need for post-national politics to understand the Palestinian cause, because solutions cannot be imposed from outside and 'Something has to be invented'.⁴⁴ These reflections echo the situation of the Kashmir disputed territories in the sense that the borderland (i.e., the existing social and cultural diversity) is rapidly vanishing because of the advancement of the state – through violence and authoritarian politics – but on the other hand neither India nor Pakistan can ignore the plight of the Kashmiris, or of those residing in Gilgit-Baltistan and in AJK. In other words, the political articulation of social diversity in terms of equality and freedom in the Kashmir context allows for a better understanding of the problem.

The argument of this book draws on the fact that the Kashmir borderland as a context for spatial transformation already exists, but is fast disappearing because of the lack of 'invention' of any formula to politically articulate such diversity. By 'advancement of the state', I mean not only the institutionalization, but also the impossibility of thinking in terms of more inclusive categories instead of caging peoples into various identities and national adherences. Borderland thinking becomes an opportunity to revisit the Kashmir dispute and disentangle its epistemological tropes from methodological nationalism. Julian Minghi has worked on Italian borderlands and focused on the transformation of former conflict borders into zones of cooperation facilitated by institutional recognition of their diversity. His understanding of borderlands is certainly normative – from conflict to cooperation – and confined to the European experience.⁴⁵ In parts of the world that are marked by the experience of colonialism, state-sanctioned immobility across borders such as that exemplified by the case of Kashmir reflects the postcolonial state's limited capacity to institutionally influence processes of 'othering'. Indeed, it is generally expected that 'othering' processes will occur just by keeping the border closed. This fortification of the edges is also a sign of

43 Balibar, 'Europe as borderland', 210.

44 Enns, 'A conversation with', 390.

45 Minghi, 'Conflict to harmony'.

fear and weakness (i.e., the loss or lack of sovereign power), which manifests as a violent process with dramatic consequences for the local populations affected.⁴⁶ The Kashmir borderland is being controlled and monitored – and thereby disciplined – by the armies and the political-bureaucratic establishments of India and Pakistan. It is being appropriated by them, the result of a struggle to maintain control over an area that has been defined as strategically valuable, and this is carried out through the division and compartmentalization of the borderland territory.

Processes of ‘othering’ concern differentiation not only from those across the border but also, and mostly, from those in the territory within, through the control of people and transformation of the border space. Walling – the proliferation of fortresses everywhere – is a representation of emerging insecurity/ies but also the ‘act’ under which other security measures are implemented to continue the old formula of ‘divide and rule’. For example, Kashmiri nationalist groups have been blamed and singled out for not being able to engage in a dialogue during the 1990s conflict with other groups within and beyond the Kashmir Valley, such as Kashmiri Pandits and Buddhists from Ladakh or Jammu. However, this view neglects the work done by other actors, such as Hindu nationalist groups, in particular the Sangh Parivar, to successfully exploit the sentiments of alienation from the Kashmir movement held by Ladakhi Buddhists and Hindus in Jammu (including the Pandit exiles).⁴⁷ The Sangh Parivar has from time to time insisted on the trifurcation of the state – that is, the administrative separation of Kashmir, Jammu, and Ladakh. Moreover, Kashmiri political actors, such as the dominant NC party, have also been responsible for using identity politics by demanding more autonomy and an internal administrative reorganization of the Jammu and Kashmir state along ethnic-religious lines.⁴⁸ Although the use of identity politics by the NC was largely an expression of self-affirmation meant to gain regional support in the tug-of-war with the governments of New Delhi, it also inadvertently created divisions in society in respect to minorities.

Furthermore, the dynamics of conflict, displacement, victimhood, and lack of trust among people has contributed to creating a context in which dialogue *with* others has become almost impossible. This context of internal fragmentation in Indian Kashmir (which is also present on the Pakistani side), for which a single group cannot be blamed, underlines the effects

46 Brown, *Walled States*, 24.

47 Bhan, *Counterinsurgency*, 13; Datta, *Uncertain Ground*, 168–169.

48 Wirsing, *Kashmir in the Shadow*, 204–209.

produced by the LoC on the 'domestic' spaces created on both sides (the state of Jammu and Kashmir, AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan) rather than across them. In other words, the security mechanisms to maintain and monitor the LoC destroy any possibility of a community – a 'we' – emerging in the area, while also being ineffective in differentiating an 'other' across the border. Returning to the example of Kashmiri nationalists' inability to engage in dialogue with other groups, such as Kashmiri Pandits or Ladakhi Buddhists, it can be argued that these groups are not equal interlocutors. They have gone through different experiences of conflict and their views about each other have been mediated by both the political circumstances and specific actors, such as security agencies.

Yet, despite the prevailing process of compartmentalization and fragmentation, some groups that are divided across the LoC are seeking to challenge this context. This is the case with the Baltis separated between Baltistan and the border areas of Ladakh (mainly in the Kargil subdistrict) on the Indian side, and the Paharis living in the mountain areas adjacent to the Kashmir Valley and stretching across the border areas of AJK. Although cross-border immobility has imposed separation – setting aside the fact that occasional interactions such as 'illegal' crossings have occurred – families and cultural groups have restored relationships with each other through meetings in third countries or marriages (in the case of Paharis), and, in a few cases, have gone through lengthy processes to visit each other in their respective countries. These exchanges, though limited, show that despite the conflict and the reality of physical separation, interactions have not stopped, and they also provide evidence of the social dynamism of the border space. Borders are established to exert violence (territoriality) and are themselves the product of violence, but they are unable to completely fulfil the purposes for which they have been created, such as the control of people, the formation of a differentiated 'other', and the distinction of a separated national-international domain.

The Kashmir borderland as a distinct political space

At the beginning of this chapter I highlighted the fact that borderlands are characterized by continuous processes in the making, the result of interactions and negotiations, and therefore are without end. This shows that the borderland has its own temporality that does not necessarily correspond with that of the state. Neither the state of Jammu and Kashmir in India nor AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan in Pakistan qualify as state spaces, if the definition

of the state as a functioning institutional framework includes a degree of participation and attachment of the people to the *polis* or implies a certain domestic territorial administrative harmonization with various degrees of autonomy. Moreover, the symbolic power of the state through the display of flags, self-advertisement, ceremonies and so forth in the public space occurs behind the scenes in all of these territories because only a restricted group of state authorities and people (and not the population at large) participate in them.⁴⁹ This is partly because such power is contested, as suggested in the boycott of Indian symbols in political and cultural events in the Kashmir Valley, but also because it proves to be loose and unstable, though repressive, in a context of relative weakness such as AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan. In the Kashmir Valley Indian symbolism is certainly boycotted, but the state continues to exercise its visibility through militarization, the occupation of territory, and the presence of slogans referencing 'nationhood' and 'security'. Meanwhile in AJK, Pakistani flags and other symbols seem to be reduced to those relating to the army that protects the borders in order to convey the idea that the region is self-governed and semi-independent, although in practice there is strong (state) control on the bureaucracy of this territory, the population in general, and, of course, dissident civilians.⁵⁰

Equally, the constitutional statuses of the state of Jammu and Kashmir, AJK, and Gilgit-Baltistan are, at least, ambivalent. Jammu and Kashmir is recognized as a state within the Indian Constitution of 1950, with special autonomy under Article 370 (through a constitutional order of 1954). This autonomy has been severely undermined by the Indian Government through legislative changes and constant interference in the democratic government of the state, including the changing of chief ministers at will and the rigging of elections, which has provoked widespread discontent.⁵¹ The culmination of this situation is the military occupation of the Kashmir Valley since 1990. Electoral processes have happened regularly since 1996, but cases of rigging and forced participation (people in remote villages close to military areas are

49 On the state and Independence Days in the Indian Kashmir areas, see Aggarwal, *Beyond Lines*, 22-36.

50 I have noticed this in my own fieldwork activities concerning the organization of interviews with bureaucrats. Despite the fact that I had a Non-Objection Certificate and I informed them about my activities in AJK, some officials were still reluctant to talk to me.

51 Although the popular discontent became publically mobilized in the Kashmir Valley in the late 1980s, the accession to India has always been questioned and a matter of political discussion. Indeed, this issue caused some dissenting voices to abandon the NC in the 1960s. This was also the reason for the creation of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front in 1977 and, earlier, the Plebiscite Front.

'persuaded' to vote) indicate their lack of transparency. Moreover, Kashmir nationalist leaders have boycotted the elections, and those Kashmir-based parties that participate in them, such as the NC and the PDP, usually remark that elections are not for deciding the future of the region but rather for addressing the most immediate needs of the population.⁵² Hindu nationalist groups under the political umbrella of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) have occasionally asked for the removal of the special autonomy granted to Jammu and Kashmir under Article 370 so that it will become like any other Indian state. This demand has been a matter of debate after the arrival to power of the chauvinist government of Narendra Modi in 2014, but constitutionalists have given warnings about the risks of its implementation. Since Article 370 is the only document that legally binds Jammu and Kashmir to India, its removal could technically grant the territory independence.⁵³

A similar situation can be observed in Pakistani-controlled AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan. AJK also has an odd constitutional set-up: it is a sort of semi-independent state with its own constitution, but its defence, foreign affairs, and communications are controlled by Pakistan.⁵⁴ The reason for this is that AJK is considered to be a territory for 'exiled' Kashmiris, and its government functions according to this premise, but its future has to be determined along with that of Indian Kashmir. This constitutional arrangement has nothing to do with the practice, however: the Pakistani establishment oversees all affairs in AJK, as I observed during a few interviews conducted with mid-range officers of the Azad Kashmir Government in Muzaffarabad in March 2010. Dissent concerning Pakistan's interference in 'domestic' affairs was subtly expressed through cases regarding development projects such as the Neelum-Jhelum dam.⁵⁵ Moreover, the Pakistani Government often argues that Azad Kashmir, unlike the Kashmir Valley, is not militarized (understood as the display of military and the paramilitary in the public space), but a more appropriate reading would be that in AJK the control of the population is tightly exercised by mainly men who do not necessarily

52 This is also a point that I often heard when I asked my interviewees about their participation in the electoral process. Regardless of their answer, it was common to hear comments such as 'elections are not for solving the Kashmir issue, they are for dealing with immediate issues such as building and repairing roads, electricity supply and those things'. Interview with a lawyer, Srinagar, 12 July 2012.

53 Rashid, 'If Article 35A'.

54 For a more detailed explanation on the relationship between AJK and Pakistan, see Snedden, *Untold Story*, 99–110.

55 Apparently, the Government of Azad Kashmir raised diverse objections to the project because of how it was carried out on AJK soil (the Government of Pakistan having the last voice), the sharing of water, and the distribution of royalties.

wear army uniforms. At least in urban spaces, intelligence agents monitor the population in plainclothes and ride motorbikes to check what people do and say.⁵⁶

Gilgit-Baltistan has the most uncertain constitutional status of all the Kashmir divided territories, despite the fact that local bureaucrats there informally refer to it as a province of Pakistan. As mentioned above, the region was governed through a colonial form of administration until 1973, and gradually a regional administrative body was developed through executive orders by the successive Pakistani presidents but this administrative body was given only very limited powers. The 2009 Gilgit-Baltistan Empowerment and Self-Governance Order equated some administrative figures such as the chief minister and institutions such as the Appellate Supreme Court with existing ones in the Pakistani provinces. The latest changes were introduced under the Gilgit-Baltistan Government Order 2018, which eliminated the Gilgit-Baltistan Council and reinforced the powers of the Chief Minister, among other modifications, but the order failed to address the most controversial issues.⁵⁷ Local inhabitants question this legislation on the basis that they still cannot cast votes in the Pakistani general elections and, from a more everyday perspective, due to the lack of administrative and political transparency in the running of regional affairs – that is, the interference of intelligence agencies, curfews, and increasing sectarian violence and its orchestration. Gilgit-Baltistan poses an interesting case of nationalism in the Pakistani state-building process. While some groups in Pakistan were, and still are, at odds with Pakistani nationalism, such as in East Bengal (now Bangladesh) earlier and in Balochistan at present, a significant number in Gilgit-Baltistan would probably like to become Pakistani citizens. However, the Pakistani state is denying this possibility until the Kashmir dispute is solved. Pakistani officials believe that, in the event that a plebiscite is held (if that ever happens), local votes would count towards support for the whole of Kashmir becoming part of Pakistan. Such a view prompts the conclusion that those living in Gilgit-Baltistan are hostages in the dispute.

The extraordinary legal status of the state of Jammu and Kashmir, AJK, and Gilgit-Baltistan has created a context of uncertainty at many levels

⁵⁶ Other authors have commented on this context. See Whitehead, *A Mission*, 41.

⁵⁷ A draft of the order can be found at: <https://es.scribd.com/document/378073496/Gilgit-Baltistan-Government-Order-2018>. The question of fundamental rights raised by this legislation was being revised by a committee lead by the Chief of Justice of Pakistan at the time of writing in December 2018. See *Dawn*, 'CJP hints at granting fundamental rights to Gilgit-Baltistan'.

(legal, political, economic, and cultural) for a long period of time. But this 'exceptional-legal condition', which manifests differently in each of these places, does not mean a stalemate until a decision is made on the final territorial settlement, but rather provides the conditions in which the state can intervene to transform these border areas. In this sense, the state of legal exception does not preclude the existence of a sovereign power deciding about this legal state of exception, as understood in Carl Schmitt's theory of exception, nor is it a legal void that has become the rule (in a landlocked territory or camp), as illustrated by Agamben.⁵⁸ Sovereign authority over the Kashmir border territories is uncertain, or at least contested, and mobility is restricted, but not completely. Legal exception in the Kashmir borderland is about place, about the control and transformation of places, and not about the restoration (by the sovereign) to a previous 'normal condition' that never existed. The context of uncertainty allows specific forms of control and intervention (militarization, extralegal powers of the state, policies aimed at the transformation of the border landscape) similar to those pointed out by Agamben in the description of the camp as a sort of laboratory.⁵⁹ However, these activities cannot be seen as the result of an intensification of sovereign power, but rather as attempts to establish sovereign power over places where sovereignty is absent or uncertain.

Interventions occur by violent means of dividing people (to create a context in which nobody can trust anyone else) and by non-violent forms of integration, such as making the borderlands economically dependent (through tourism and the building of infrastructures), and transforming the symbolic space (e.g., the Hindu pilgrimages in the Kashmir Valley). Non-violent means of integration are articulated on the basis of delivering good governance to these neglected and poorly administered territories. The latter is explicitly mentioned in the various legal and consultation documents that address the administration of these territories, such as the Gilgit-Baltistan Empowerment and Self-Government Order of 2009, the reports of the working groups of the Jammu & Kashmir Roundtable – created by the Indian Government in 2006 to address the concerns of the Kashmir Valley – which became public in May 2007, and the expert mission which drafted the report. *A New Compact with the people of Jammu & Kashmir*.⁶⁰ In these documents, 'governance' implies the transformation of the border areas by simultaneously opening and enclosing them within

58 Agamben, *Stato di Eccezione*, Ch. 4 and 109–113.

59 Agamben. *Homo Sacer*, 131–211.

60 Kumar, Ansari, and Padgaonkar, *A New Compact*.

the 'state space'. Furthermore, the 'opening' of the border in the context of India-Pakistan cross-LoC initiatives is meant to create a 'normal border context' in which various levels of social interactions can take place, as an attempt to transform the disputed character of these territories.⁶¹ The logic of governance reduces the political conflict to an issue of management. Thus whereas in the Gilgit-Baltistan order there is no reference to the constitutional status of the region, the latest report of the Indian interlocutors for Jammu and Kashmir suggests on page 2 that 'Jammu and Kashmir should continue to function as a single entity within the Indian Union,' despite the fact that they recommend the setting of (on page 3) a constitutional committee to revise the constitutional relation with the state, given its special autonomy.⁶² In other words, the report does not question the status of Jammu and Kashmir as part of the Indian state, which is the matter of contention by Kashmiri nationalists and by Pakistan. Similar views are expressed by the European Union and the USA when showing concern about the 'dispute,' such as in the recommendations given in the report of the European Parliament in May 2007, and in the US-Pakistan joint statement of 22 October 2015.⁶³ The idea behind these comments is that the dispute can be 'managed' and contained under (state) control, bilaterally, as an issue between India and Pakistan.

Governance thus constitutes another way of controlling territory, another stage, after military solutions – such as the militarization of the Kashmir Valley and the attempts by Pakistan to capture it – have proved unsuccessful. Maybe, as a number of authors have pointed out, the focus on governance indicates instances in which the sovereignty of the state is vanishing or rendered contingent, but, on the other hand, it also shows the state's capacity to rescale and adapt to changing socio-economic conditions.⁶⁴ However, the magnitude of the interventions into certain places can also be interpreted as the intensification of state sovereignty and evidences these tensions. This can be seen, for example, in Bhan's writing about how counterinsurgency

61 It is worth mentioning that the proposal made in 2006 by the former Pakistani dictator and politician Pervez Musharraf was on these very same lines but, while he was arguing for respecting 'state sovereignty' on both sides of the divided territories, he was also advocating for the formation of a distinctive polity that could address the existing fragmentation and probably guarantee some protection from violence perpetrated by the state.

62 On the constitutional status of Gilgit-Baltistan, see Mato Bouzas, 'Mixed legacies', 872-875.

63 See White House, Press Office, '2015 Joint Statement'.

64 Elden, *Terror and Territory*, 171-178; Brown, *Walled States*, 66-71; Mezzadra and Neilson, *Border as Method*, 197-204.

initiatives bring the military and Brokpa villages into closer relationships of interdependence and how development territorializes identities.⁶⁵

The power of the state appears to be disseminated within the borders in symbolic terms, but its coercive side is unequally distributed and concentrated in some locations (e.g., airports, checkpoints, military zones, and street curfews) and in the monitoring of bodies (inspections of cars, body checks, the need to provide information to people identified as working for the security agencies, the need for collaboration – paid or unpaid – as army porters, the limiting of civil and political rights). This context coexists with a climate of apparent economic normality, in the sense that normal economic activities among private individuals are not disrupted, although the state interferes by fostering dependence and dictating the pace and direction of such activities. Thus the state operates behind the scenes in the borderland, partly because its power has been challenged and resisted by the border inhabitants, and partly because this serves its strategy of converting the undefined condition of these borderlands into sovereign state spaces.

Conclusion

The territorialization processes in the Kashmir borderland reveal that the state is not in full control of these territories despite the attempts to bring them under state purview. These attempts do not imply the traditionally assumed automatic spread of state power – through conquest, in the classical sense, or institutionalization processes that embody governmentality as a new rationality, in the modern sense – over areas which are not yet under its control. By already having some degree of control over the edges, the aim of the postcolonial states of India and Pakistan is transformation of the space within for the purposes of domination. This is carried out by the exploitation of the exceptional, in legal terms, status of the borderland, which creates a context of uncertainty at several levels. This has been illustrated in the processes of appropriation and control of the border road between Srinagar and Kargil by the paramilitary and the posted signs with messages of protection for the Hindu pilgrims doing the Amarnath yatra, which both welcome them and seek to make their presence necessary in that dangerous territory. The objective is to convert the area into a normal state space by eliminating conflict (through the military and police) while facilitating incorporation through symbolic and economic means (the political use of

65 Bhan, *Counterinsurgency*, 118-19, Ch. 3-4.

Hindu pilgrimages in a majority Muslim area and the economic dependence on tourism). At the border it can be observed that the security discourse on Kashmir is framed elsewhere: it is not based on the understandings and feelings of the people who live there, but instead imposed on the territory through various means – military, legal, economic, and so on.

Although borderlands emerge as a result of a history of multiple interactions that highlight human diversity and adaptation, but also conflict, territorialization processes acting on behalf of state spatiality follow a logic by which borderlands are deemed not to exist. This poses a paradox because a number of international processes – migration, smuggling, interethnic relations, and so on – cannot be conceived without the existence of borderlands. The existence of the Kashmir borderland, like other borderlands, revolves around a dual process of incorporation into state polities (India and Pakistan) through violence, and a process of exclusion through the denial of democratization. This condition of being part of the state but not being on equal terms with people living in other state territories underlines the provisional character of borderlands in political terms – that is, borderlands exist but their political status cannot be recognized. Thus the definition of Kashmir as a borderland contains an element of impossibility that needs to be grasped: the impossibility to construct a political space because of the permanent uncertainty in which border people live.

3 Urban Areas Near the LoC (I)

The 'Kashmir Issue' in Srinagar and Muzaffarabad

Abstract

The 'Kashmir issue' manifests differently in Srinagar and Muzaffarabad. The dispute demonstrates both spatial hierarchies and a centre-periphery organization. The disputed condition of Srinagar and Muzaffarabad is framed through the legal regime of exception. This is manifested in Srinagar by militarization, which is backed by a series of legal instruments that limit peoples' basic rights, and also by the transformation and fragmentation of the urban space. Conflict in Muzaffarabad, a place of refuge for many Kashmiris from the Valley, is related to the display of Kashmiriness as an attachment to the conflict in the Valley, which in effect restricts the possibility of advocating for other political forms owing to the control of the territory by Pakistan and the restrictive political context.

Keywords: Kashmir issue, Srinagar, Muzaffarabad, military urbanism, production of space(s), mobility

Manifestations and understandings of the Kashmir dispute differ from place to place. In the Kashmir Valley there is a context of open violence, while in AJK there is a question of freedom of expression. Moreover, proximity to the LoC enforces separation and militarization, with various consequences for the populations living in the area. The next two chapters explore these consequences in four urban areas on either side of the LoC by examining what it means for their inhabitants to be part of the dispute. The locations chosen are the Muzaffarabad and Srinagar municipalities in AJK and the Kashmir Valley, respectively, and Skardu, Baltistan and Kargil, Ladakh. For practical purposes I refer to these urban areas as 'cities', although not all of them qualify as such. While Srinagar has more than one million inhabitants, Kargil can be considered a small town with a population of a

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little over 15,000. Muzaffarabad's municipality is the home of around half a million people (Muzaffarabad district has 650,000 inhabitants), while Skardu, pending the publication of official data from the 2017 census, can be estimated to have a population of around 131,000.¹ Fieldwork has been conducted mainly in these locations of significant human agglomeration and therefore the findings cannot necessarily be extended to other locations or to rural contexts. Their condition as 'border cities' can also be called into question, because their distance from the LoC ranges from 10 kilometres in the case of Kargil to some 120 kilometres in the case of Srinagar. Regardless of these differences, all of them are very much affected by the conflict dynamics of the LoC.

In this chapter I consider Muzaffarabad and Srinagar. I argue that the disputed condition, framed as a legal regime of exception, of these territories acts as the context for a number of interventions by state actors that deviate from the normal path of politics.² These interventions occur in a variety of fields including security, development, and leisure, with the aim of fully integrating the border territories into the state. In this light, the borderland condition of these locations is both the context that allows such interventions to take place and the space to be eliminated as a result of such interventions.

In the following section I explore how the militarization of the urban spaces in the Kashmir borderland – the so-called military urbanism – contributes to border making by rendering violence an issue of 'domestic order' and controlling people's mobilities. I then examine the manifestations

1 Pakistan conducted a census in 2017 (the previous one dates from 1998), but at the time of writing at the end of 2018, no data has been officially published concerning the populations of AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan. However, the data does circulate on some websites and is in use by NGOs. Data concerning Muzaffarabad's District population is given in the report 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (p. 4) of the Azad Government of the State of Jammu and Kashmir, Planning and Development Department. The document 'Damages earthquake-2005' provided by the State Earthquake Reconstruction & Rehabilitation Agency (SERRA) notes a population of 970,000, of which half or more probably live in the main city. Data for Baltistan was obtained by chance during an interview at an NGO in Skardu (28 June 2018), and is part of the same unpublished census report.

2 By the term 'state actors' I refer to institutions formally acting on behalf of the state which controls these territories such as the army and intelligence agencies. These state actors do not limit their work to enforcing the rule of law but also create their own framework of operations, including developing their own interests. I consider the state, as defined by Bob Jessop, to be a set of apparatuses whose socially accepted function is to enforce collective binding decisions on the population of a given territorial area in the name of the common interest or general will of an imagined political community (the idea of the state). Jessop, *The State*, 49–51. By 'normal path of politics', I refer to the expression of political authority that abides by the rule of law, using instruments of negotiation and through institutionalized channels.

of conflict in Srinagar, providing a brief description of the city based on the existing administrative and legal regimes, its social diversity, and the mobility/immobility of urban dwellers. In the third section, I follow the same approach to analyse the case of Muzaffarabad. In doing this, I intend to incorporate the ideas and opinions about the Kashmir dispute given by residents of these areas, specifically focusing on how the inhabitants frame the spatial borders of the conflict that affects them.

Militarization of the urban

The urban areas in the Kashmiri disputed territories fall under what Graham defines as 'new military urbanism': 'a constellation of ideas, techniques and norms of security and military doctrine' that permeates the way war and organized political violence function using a city's infrastructures and basic architectures.³ While interstate violence is rare, Graham observes, cities have increasingly become the sites of state and non-state political violence, that is, the *locus* through which the state imaginary and practice of violence continues to reproduce itself. War has become an urbanized affair but, as Saskia Sassen notes, unlike in the past, when cities were destroyed with no respect for human life, such destruction is no longer considered acceptable by the international community.⁴ Instead, the continual use of techniques of control and killing over time raise the level of permissible violence, which goes unnoticed provided the city is not under attack. This can be seen in places such as Srinagar. While during the early 1990s the killing of dozens of demonstrators demanding self-determination raised concerns among international human rights associations, during the unrest in summer 2016 the continual killing and maiming of civilians – many blinded by metal pellets – was hardly featured in the international media.⁵

Graham depicts a chaotic world, an uneven geography of military urbanism that blurs the difference between cities in the 'homeland' (in Europe and the US or other parts of the world's most developed areas) and those on the 'colonial frontiers' or peripheries, mainly located in the global south. Likewise, other scholars such as Sassen also underline the decentred character of the new geography of power.⁶ By focusing on the Kashmiri

3 Graham, 'New military', 85.

4 Sassen, 'Urban capabilities', 234-236.

5 Waheed, 'India's crackdown in Kashmir'.

6 Sassen, *Losing Control*, 98.

urban border areas, I maintain that such spatial differentiation is a quite organized affair and that place matters. Interventions by postcolonial states such as India and Pakistan in parts of their territory where state authority has been weak (i.e., FATA, parts of Balochistan, north-east India, or the forests of central India which are under Maoist control) are acts of territorial consolidation. The relatively long distance and disconnection from the centres of political power mean that state actors can undertake measures that would be considered difficult to enforce in mainland territories of the state. For example, during the protests in Srinagar during the summer of 2016 the Indian Government used technology to impose a shutdown of the telephone and internet connections in the Kashmir Valley, making any communication with the rest of the world impossible.⁷

Mobility is often associated with a progressive force in the context of globalization in which the national frame loses its importance. However, as Michael Skey observes, this positive view of mobility can be misleading in the cases of those for whom the national is a referent which marks their own experiences.⁸ Cities are often characterized as open mobile spaces, despite the existence of new forms of urban disconnection, forced immobility, and the creation of enclosures and marginalization.⁹ In the case of the cities considered in this study, on the other hand, the relative immobility of city dwellers is related to dispossession caused by the erection and closure of borders, and the subsequent problematic references to a national frame. As a result, the urban groups display alternative forms of place-making rather than the nationally ascribed ones, such as demanding a separate state and claiming to belong to a specific community across the border.

In Srinagar, conflict is present in everyday life through checkpoints, the occupation of urban civilian buildings (former hotels, cinemas, etc.) by the paramilitary and their constant presence patrolling the streets, scenes of police employing violence against civilians, urban guerrillas, and so on. In Muzaffarabad, Skardu, and Kargil, on the other hand, conflict is mostly perceived – at least by the outsider – as remaining at a latent level, as a fluid barrier between what can and cannot be expressed and done in public owing

7 Mehta, 'India had the highest'; Human Rights Watch, 'India: 20 Internet shutdowns'.

8 As Michael Skey observes as a critique of Ulrich Beck's 'cosmopolitan vision' of diminishing the importance of the national frame, the view of mobility as a progressive force can be reductive in contexts where activities and interventions are articulated in reference to specific bounded frames – not only national, but ethnic, regional, etc. See Skey, 'Boundaries and belonging', 103. The same critique applies to Sheller and Urry's mobilities' paradigm, even when this concept embraces contexts of immobility and disconnection. Sheller and Urry, 'Mobilities paradigm', 211.

9 Sheller and Urry, *Mobile Technologies*, 1–5.

to the presence of large army camps and the role of intelligence agencies. Because conflict manifests differently from place to place, it is possible to talk about a hierarchy of places when attempting to understand the dispute. As Ananya Kabir has described, the Kashmir Valley is the object of desire, the bone of contention, because it is central to the claims of Pakistani, Indian (as part of the country's secular project), and Kashmiri nationalism.¹⁰ The emergence of an insurgent movement in the late 1980s only reinforced its centrality. Muzaffarabad's importance lies in its role as a place of exile and of the organization of the armed struggle (with the support of Pakistani intelligence agencies). Residents of Skardu and Kargil are aware that the dispute is 'because of the Valley': they generally see themselves as having a marginal role in the whole question, despite the fact that they suffer from it.

Srinagar: the epicentre of conflict

The city

With a population of 1,236,829, Srinagar is the largest city of the Kashmir Valley and can be considered the epicentre of the dispute.¹¹ Along with Jammu, Srinagar was the political centre of the former princely state (1846-1947) and an economic hub for the regional shawl and handicrafts trade to Europe and other places, along the network later known as the 'Silk Route'.¹² These past interactions explain the still-cosmopolitan character of the city, despite the closing of the borders in the neighbourhood in 1947-1949. Fearing for their lives after the establishment of the People's Republic of China, Uyghurs and Kazakhs from Xinjiang and Tibetan Muslims sought refuge in Srinagar, and their descendants still live in the city. More recently, a small colony of displaced Ladakhi Muslims who fled the anti-Muslim boycott led by Buddhists in the early 1990s were living in the Safa Kadal neighbourhood in July 2012. Despite the fact that the conflict in the Kashmir Valley affected these groups, leading some families to move to Turkey in the 1990s, Srinagar became a place of refuge, of being protected, according to their account.¹³ At the same time, conflict in the Valley did not discourage

¹⁰ Kabir, *Territory of Desire*, 15.

¹¹ Government of India, Census of 2011.

¹² Zutshi, *Languages of Belonging*, 80-87.

¹³ On the resettlement of Kazakh and Uighur groups in Turkey, see Andrews and Benninhaus, *Ethnic Groups*, 593-595.

a stream of immigration of poor daily labourers from the northern Indian states and from Nepal. The conflict expelled or made other groups flee, such as the native Pandits who, feeling threatened, sought refuge in camps in Jammu and other parts of India.¹⁴

Numerous accounts of the Kashmir separatist conflict that erupted in the 1990s describe how violence became a permanent feature in places such as Srinagar, completely disrupting urban life and tearing the fabric of society apart.¹⁵ Although the fighting mainly occurred in the hinterlands, severely affecting rural areas, urban violence and the consequent militarization of the cities became the identifiable measure by which to understand the state of the conflict. This is because, despite the violence, the cities have remained more accessible and developments there have received more attention than the often neglected tragedies occurring in the countryside.¹⁶

In the early 2000s, however, militancy decreased and the Indian and Kashmiri governments adopted a new approach to specific sectors of the population who were disenchanted with a decade of violence. In fact, the India-Pakistan dialogue initiated in 2004 coincided with Indian rhetoric on Kashmir arguing for the existence of a 'normalization' process following the arrival of Mufti Mohammad Sayeed to power in the state two years earlier. The chief minister had adopted a 'healing touch' approach to 'heal' the wounds of more than a decade of conflict.¹⁷ This approach was framed in terms of initiatives in the development and economic fields meant to revive the stagnant economy. It also implied a humanitarian component regarding victims of the violence from all sides and included a dialogue with militants and separatist leaders. The 'healing touch' agenda conveyed the idea of a post-conflict scenario, although this assertion has been challenged over the years by new episodes of urban mobilization, such as the stone-pelting movement that erupted in the summer of 2010 and the dramatic demonstrations

14 Datta, *Uncertain Ground*.

15 Numerous works on the Kashmir conflict offer details of incidents in Srinagar that provide an idea of the existing context at the time. See, for example, Schofield, *Kashmir in Conflict*, 145-173; Bose, *Roots of Conflict*, 95-96, 107-115; Mattoo, 'Women's college'.

16 One of the cases that did feature in the international news was the Chittisinghpura massacre against the Sikh community on the eve of the American President Bill Clinton's visit to the subcontinent in March 2000, in which 34 Sikh men were murdered. The circumstances surrounding the responsibility for this tragedy and its motivations have never been fully clarified. See Jabbar, 'Blood soil'.

17 For an overview of this policy in relation to terrorist activities, see Swami, 'Terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir', 53. Also, the respected scholar Madhu Kishwar wrote an 'intriguing' (because of its paternalistic tone) piece on the effects of the 'healing touch' policy, 'Best antidote'. For a more critical note on the discourses of healing, see Bhan, *Counterinsurgency*, 8-9.

in the summer and autumn of 2016 that were fiercely suppressed by the security forces.¹⁸ These developments demonstrate that, despite the official narrative, the situation in the Kashmir Valley remains far from normalized.

Srinagar's urban geography of conflict includes landmarks related to violent episodes which are part of the collective memory, including houses, cinemas, bridges, and shrines.¹⁹ The same occurs with buildings and historical sites that are currently occupied by the security forces: while people refer to these locations in their accounts, they are no longer accessible.²⁰ Certain lower middle-class neighbourhoods in the old city, such as Maisuma and its surroundings, are known for their support of the armed struggle, and mosques have become symbols of different political affiliations. During the curfews in the summers of 2010 and 2011, and during autumn 2014, these places were the most affected by mobility restrictions and were no-go areas for visitors and tourists. The traditional architecture of these districts contrasts with that of the more impersonal buildings of residential areas characterized by large houses owned by wealthy locals living abroad, bureaucrats, businessmen, and a few leaders of the nationalist camp. Location, in terms of one's place of origin, matters in the understanding of the conflict.

During interviews with people who supported the nationalist cause (including journalists, university professors, bureaucrats, lawyers, shopkeepers, and students), I noticed an emphasis on the fact that 'conflict affected all segments of society'. However, in meetings with the families of victims of violence – people involved in militancy, or disappeared or killed by the security forces – I observed that most of them belonged to the urban and rural lower-middle classes. This suggests that the exercise of violence, dissent, and repression in the urban landscape has an element of class.²¹ The armed struggle, though widely supported by different social strata, was mainly carried out by the less well-off (though not poor) elements of the society, who also suffered most of the consequences.

18 For an understanding of the mobilizations that took place in the summer of 2010 from the perspective of mainly Kashmiri young scholars, journalists, activists, and writers, see: Kak, *Until my Freedom*.

19 On the history of Srinagar's cinemas, see Nakas, 'Cinema-halls'.

20 A personal account of the city and how conflict has altered the urban landscape is provided by Peer, *Curfewed Night*, 108–35. See also, Bhat, 'Captive city'.

21 To acknowledge that there is a class issue means addressing a difference that could undermine the collective values of the armed struggle as 'Kashmiris'. I have searched for this class element in literature written by Kashmiri authors in English, but only found a reference to this aspect in the short stories by Bashir, *Scattered Souls*.

Image 3.1 Lal Mandi footbridge with the *azadi* (freedom) slogan, Srinagar 2014



Photograph by Antía Mato Bouzas

Militarization is the most striking feature of the city. The security forces, military, paramilitary, and state police occupy and monitor large parts of the public space, blurring the boundary between civil society and the military. Militarization is sanctioned under AFSPA of 1990, an instrument of the Indian Government used to regain control of disturbed areas. AFSPA actually confers on the armed forces 'special powers' by which they become an ambivalent authority outside of legal scrutiny. Aside from the large army camps in Srinagar, such as Badami Bagh (which can itself be considered a city within a city) and Badam at the airport, compounds of the paramilitary force

of the CRPF are also scattered throughout the city.²² Improvised checkpoints and watchtowers with vigilant armed soldiers keep an eye on passers-by. Militarization implies control and the use of security techniques on urban dwellers. On the other hand, the city is a weak regime and the existence of the civic has the capacity to temper the destruction exercised by the state and non-state powerful actors.²³ In other words, militarization constitutes a tool for waging urban warfare and gaining control over the meaning of the city, because it is an instrument of support for the nation-state's project in the peripheries.²⁴ Srinagar's new military urbanism – to appropriate Graham's concept – serves the purpose of controlling and taming the city as part of the national space: that is, of making the city an indisputable part of the state.

The conflict

Conflict in Srinagar cannot be detached from the militarized condition of the city. The people with whom I interacted made frequent references to this condition as part of everyday life. During my meetings, I asked three specific questions after introducing the topic of my research: 'Who is a Kashmiri?', 'What is the Kashmir issue about?', and 'What are the boundaries of the dispute?'²⁵ In posing these questions, I wanted to know what ordinary people understood by 'Kashmir'. The idea was to identify the nature of the boundary (division) and, following the work of Richard Jenkins, the interplay of nationalism and ethnicity within it.²⁶

When I began to carry out fieldwork in Srinagar in May 2010, I noticed that it was not rare for my interviewees – traders, petty businessmen, and university professors – to make a digression in which they positioned themselves vis-à-vis *masla-e Kashmir* ('the Kashmir issue'). This positioning was expressed in sentences such as: 'this [the specific topic to which he/she was referring] has nothing to do with the *issue*', 'while the *issue* is

22 A rare news article about land occupied by the security forces estimates 1.7 lakh *kanals* of unauthorized occupation in the Jammu and Kashmir state (some 85.27 sq. km), where the total land under the army and paramilitary forces is 7.77 lakh *kanals* (around 389.77 sq. km). If the total territory administered by India is 81,954 sq. km., the land under the military and security forces amounts to almost 0.5 percent. Maqbool, '1.70 kanal under unauthorized'.

23 Sassen, 'Urban capabilities', 235–236. By 'non-state powerful actors', I refer to militant groups supported or operating from the Pakistani side, such as Lashkar-e-Taiba, that have committed terrorist attacks in the Kashmir Valley and in India (such as Mumbai in November 2008).

24 Gohain, 'Militarized borderlands', 22.

25 By 'boundaries of the dispute', I was interested in understanding the kind of entity they envisioned and, if that is the case, its territorial boundaries. This aspect is discussed in the Conclusion.

26 Jenkins, 'Boundaries and borders', 12, 25.

not being solved', 'depending on the solution of the Kashmir *issue*', and so on.²⁷ The 'issue' was referred to as something above them in which they could not interfere, implying an element of uncertainty in the sense that a decision would have to be taken at some point. Only in very few concrete cases – such as in a meeting with a businesswoman belonging to the Dogra community, a high-ranking member of the state police, and two high-ranking bureaucrats – was the 'issue' articulated as a matter of the past, as a matter of law and order, and as a revolt of misguided youth during the 1990s. The difference between those for whom a settlement is yet to come and those for whom the issue is already part of the past lies in the challenge of Kashmir's accession to India.

In the course of the conflict in the 1990s and early 2000s, the official Indian discourse portrayed those who revolted as non-loyal members of the Indian nation. India has maintained that the armed struggle was not a genuine movement evolving from Kashmiri society but was instead fabricated by Pakistan through manipulating the local youth, the so-called 'Pakistan sponsored-terrorism'.²⁸ Yet this standpoint has carefully avoided relating the armed struggle to Kashmir's wish to join Pakistan.²⁹ Pakistan, on the other hand, has insisted that the movement was indigenous and supported the demand for self-determination, although it would want the area to merge with Pakistan. Popular rhetoric in India has normally played on the fact that joining Pakistan is the worst option for secular Kashmiris.³⁰ Although the Kashmiri nationalist movement has relied on Pakistani support, and some groups such as the Jamaat-e-Islami (Jamaat) defend the possibility of annexation to that state, popular sympathies are not with Pakistan. To illustrate the case, in an interview in 2012 with a respected professor of law known for supporting the Jamaat and at the time close to its leader Syed Ali Shah Gilani, he referred to the future of Kashmir in the Valley in the following terms: 'Now, if there is a referendum in the Valley, people would favour independence rather than joining Pakistan.'³¹

27 Kabir, *Territory of Desire*, 15.

28 Mato Bouzas, *India y Pakistán*, 138–139.

29 In her journalistic account of the Kashmir conflict based on her friendship with the NC leader Farooq Abdullah, Tavleen Singh observes how the Indian establishment always saw Kashmiris as traitors because of how they questioned the accession of the State to India, but also because of their tilt towards Pakistan, which was basically an expression of anger. Singh, *A Tragedy*, 1, 122, 152. The memoir by A.S. Dulat, the former head of the intelligence service Research & Analysis Wing, also conveys this idea. Dulat and Sinha, *The Vajpayee Years*.

30 Kishwar, 'Best antidote', 14.

31 Interview, Srinagar, 12 May 2011.

During our long exchange, in which we discussed opinions about the conflict and he subscribed to the general views of the Jamaat, it became clear that independence was not his own preference, but, he stressed, based on his assessment, was what the people wanted.

If a decision will need to be taken in the future, uncertainty will prevail and permeate everyday life until the moment of decision arrives. Yet things can go on like this for a long time and therefore the present needs to be administered. At least, this is the answer I was repeatedly given when I enquired into the apparent contradiction, in my view, of 'defending that there is an issue to be solved' while at the same time 'participating in electoral processes' that legitimize the existing 'unjust' political order.³² A lawyer from Srinagar in his early sixties who was sympathetic to nationalists views, but who claimed to have voted for the Janata Party in the state elections of 1977, tried to explain this to me in the following way: 'The elections are not for deciding the status of the region. They are for administering the most pending issues. We need roads, electricity, and other infrastructures.'³³ The provisional sense of the present reflected in these views raises questions about the ways the conflict is being sustained over time.

As the epicentre of the Kashmir movement for self-determination, life in Srinagar provides some insights into how the conflict is being sustained. Forms of local mobilization and expressions of dissent have been severely curtailed: critical scholars and foreign human rights activists are not welcome in the area; student associations are not allowed in the university; and demonstrations are severely repressed.³⁴ Other less visible and unwritten forms of coercion and harassment of dissenting voices also occur.³⁵ At the same time, the nationalist leadership of the Hurriyat, split into two factions, is viewed with ambivalence by ordinary people, because although the

32 Kak, 'Ballot, bullet', 33.

33 The Kashmiri-based parties contesting elections are mainly the National Conference (NC) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP).

34 See, for example: Mehta, 'How I was deported'; Masood, 'Lecture by Mridu Rai'. Following the student demonstrations in many towns and cities in the Kashmir Valley in April 2017, the telephone mobile companies were asked to suspend their advanced networks in order to manage the leaking of information about the protests and repression by the security forces. See PTI, 'Kashmir: students clash'.

35 During my field visits I witnessed several violent scenes: youth throwing stones at the paramilitary, and who in return were severely retaliated against; police beating people who were peacefully protesting due to the apparent mismanagement of a high ranking police officer; verbal abuse, and occasional frisking. Some interviewees have mentioned the lack of academic freedom at Kashmir University and other cultural institutions, and the occasional coercion of journalists by security forces.

leaders are morally respected they are also criticized in private for toying with Pakistan and being ambivalent about the country's role regarding the militancy.³⁶ Despite the restricted political space, a few women have put forward an agenda to address some sensitive issues. One of them is the well-known mother of a disappeared person Parveena Ahangar, who through the Association of Parents of Disappeared People (APDP) has been collecting data on enforced disappearances during the conflict in order to seek justice.³⁷ Although the involvement of the Indian security forces in disappearances, torture, rape, and mass graves is well-known and documented, the Indian state has never made a public apology.

The period 2008-2017 saw an increase in popular mobilization and opportunities to express dissent in the public space have been severely curtailed. The unrest that broke out in the Valley in July 2016 after the killing of Burhan Wani, a popular militant of Hizbul Mujahideen, caused several hundred deaths and mutilations. Burhan Wani had engaged with social media and symbolized the emergence of a new generation of fighters who raised hopes for the continuation of the armed struggle.³⁸ The demonstrations (as well as ordinary civilians not taking part in the mobilizations) were put down with new methods such as metal pellets (first introduced in Kashmir during the revolts of 2010) which blinded many, including children.³⁹ Despite the façade of normalization claimed by political authorities in Srinagar and Delhi, popular mobilization has increased, and its violent suppression has seen a refinement of security techniques. In the same way, normalization and the continuation of the political struggle has become a rather spatialized urban affair.

The latter can be exemplified in the tourism industry, considered the main indicator that 'Kashmir is going back to normal'. Tourism has significantly grown in places such as Srinagar since the mid-2000s, bringing with it the development of the industry: there has been a boom in hotel construction, houseboats, and the opening of restaurants, cafes, and shops to cater to visitors' needs. Indian tourists, and to a lesser extent foreigners, literally

36 Most of its leaders have political, social, and personal connections to Pakistan and have relatively more facilities to travel there compared to the hazards faced by ordinary families divided across the LoC.

37 Interview, Srinagar, 31 May 2011. Data on APDP can be found at: www.apdpkashmir.com.

38 In October 2014, a well-informed local journalist from Srinagar pointed me toward a new generation of Kashmiris who were engaged in the armed struggle and based in southern Kashmir. Interestingly, he did not consider the members of Lashkar-e-Taiba who were involved in sporadic attacks at the time as 'local'. See Shah, 'Kashmir's young rebels'.

39 Naz, 'Kashmir 2016'; Waheed, 'India's crackdown'.

occupy the surroundings of the Dal Gate and Residency Road in the summer. However, as I observed during my visits between 2010 and 2014, while this happened in the so-called 'tourist areas', in other parts of the city curfews were imposed, disrupting the everyday life of urban dwellers and impeding access to the old city, and roads were blocked with barbed wire and barricades. 'Normalization' implies the production of space for the normal, which in Srinagar is associated with leisure activities connected to tourism.

During my visit to Srinagar in late October 2014, *de facto* curfews (on account of the beginning of Ashura, the Shia celebration during the month of Muharram) were announced as 'restrictions of movements' in the newspapers.⁴⁰ 'Restrictions' was also the term employed by the CRPF and police personnel I approached on several occasions to find out whether I could visit a certain place in Srinagar. 'Curfew', a legal exceptional instrument that must be declared, was being reduced to a 'restriction' of movement that could occur in a number of non-exceptional situations. By not declaring curfews, the security and political establishment was conveying an idea of normality.

Transformations in Srinagar's urban space are a reminder of how Agamben's oft-cited state of exception is becoming a characteristic feature of contemporary societies. Agamben's thought, which is rooted in part in the Foucaultian development of biopolitics in terms of the disciplinary control of bodies, revolves around the intensification of control by the sovereign power – but it allows several important aspects of contemporary life to go unnoticed.⁴¹ One of these aspects is spatial mobility, which Agamben surprisingly leaves unexplored; another is the dispossession (of the individual) that makes moments of resistance impossible.⁴² Srinagar, a militarized city that is part of a territory ruled by exceptional legal instruments and itself the host of torture centres, in some ways resembles Agamben's understanding of the camp.⁴³ However, the departure from Srinagar of local qualified people as migrants to the USA and Europe and as pilgrims to Saudi Arabia, and the arrival to this city of tourists and outside workers are constant features of

40 Yusuf, 'Curfew-like restrictions', 1, 8.

41 Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 189–201.

42 Specifically, when Agamben addresses the relationship of 'territory, order and birth'. Ibid., 196–201.

43 On the existence of torture in Kashmir and the torture centres in Srinagar, see the documentary directed by Jezza Neumann, *Kashmir's Torture Trail*: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oNTB_d3Ifqo. On the idea of the camp, I refer to the relatively bounded character of this territory, which is ruled by an exceptional legal regime, which makes ordinary people vulnerable to the power of the sovereign and unable to see the possibility of a change.

the urban landscape. Yet this mobility contrasts with the immobility of the conflict, the context of stalemate that is described above.

Mobility in the militarized city is restricted and movement is channelled in certain directions while others are banned – that is, mobility across the LoC is forbidden and travel to Pakistan is discouraged through the erection of many bureaucratic obstacles. The city's apparent openness goes hand in hand with its gradual walling; the urban space is being constantly divided. Furthermore, the mobility of tourists *in* the city (mobility of the normal) contrasts with the lack of mobility of urban dwellers, the relatively frequent house arrests of critical nationalist leaders, and the lack of access of locals to the public space under the AFSPA's restrictions. Whereas some religious communities such as the Shia cannot make use of the main public space during celebrations, other religious organizations such as Ahl-e-Hadith (which allegedly has connections to religious radicalism) are becoming important entrepreneurs in the fields of education and charity.⁴⁴ Mobility invites a reflection on who is mobile and who is not in the disputed city, and the reasons for that condition.

The borders of the conflict

One of the most problematic aspects of the Kashmir conflict lies in the relationship of territory to time. Territory is a product of appropriation during a specific historical-political period, but the temporality of the conflict has changed the terms of what is disputed.⁴⁵ Kashmir is often presented as a frozen dispute resulting from decolonization and concerning the political status of the territories of the former princely state. Such a perspective attaches more importance to the borders of the former political entity, as well as to the LoC (as a dividing line resulting from warfare), than to the experiences of those living in the affected territories for whom state belonging has been a rather problematic experience.

I argue that the incorporation of people's views on the dispute can contribute to disentangling its persistent monolithic representation as an

44 In an interview on 12 May 2010, Maulana Showkat (who was assassinated in April 2011) indicated that Ahl-e-Hadith was running some 150 schools in the state at the primary and secondary level under the Salafiya Educational Research Trust and was involved in various charity activities. The organization also wanted to build a Transworld Muslim University, which has not materialized at the time of writing. Mr. Showkat claimed that the organization had some 1.5 million members in the Jammu and Kashmir state, which seems a bit exaggerated.

45 For a discussion on the meanings of territory (as state territory and hence 'bounded'), see Elden, *Terror and Territory*, xxv-xxviii; Raffestin, 'Space, territory', 135.

Indo-Pakistan affair. The conflict has changed over time and uncertainty has played a significant role in determining the life conditions of residents. In Srinagar, militarization and the persistence of popular resistance reminds us that a war is still going on, as some of my interlocutors would say. However, politicians, security personnel, the administration, and sectors of the business community who back the project of making the city a tourist attraction all subscribe to the view that it is a post-conflict scenario. However, as some interlocutors defending one or another view have expressed, 'things can turn worse at any time'.

Time and uncertainty about the future have also blurred the borders of the conflict. During the whole period of my fieldwork in Srinagar, only a few interviewees mentioned the location of the borders of the state in October 1947 (before the tribal invasion) and admitted that the Kashmir Valley is the area whose status needs to be ascertained, either as an independent state or as part of Pakistan. Three university professors I met underlined the differentiated cultural character of the Valley and the Kashmiri-speaking areas of Jammu (Kishtwar and Doda) as constituting a community distinct from other regions of Jammu and Ladakh, in line with the ethnic arguments discussed in some academic works on the dispute.⁴⁶ They explained these were just their personal views, based on their own visits and knowledge of the territory rather than on statistical data.⁴⁷ Their accounts differed, however, from others for whom the territorial or ethnic aspects (in terms of language or religion) of the 'Kashmir issue' were not clearly defined or at least were not relevant.

One such account was that of the Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, chairman of one faction of Hurriyat and the spiritual leader of Kashmiri Muslims. During a meeting at his residence, I asked about the borders of the Kashmir issue, referring specifically to the case of Ladakh and Baltistan where the majority do not sympathize with the nationalist cause. He observed: 'Kashmir will be about what people want it to be. If Ladakhis do not want to be involved, they have to decide, it is their choice. But first let us have the possibility to

46 For example, Behera, *State, Identity*; Wirsing, *Kashmir in the Shadow*, Ch. 3.

47 One of these professors did refer to a post-poll survey conducted by the Delhi Center for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) after the assembly elections of 2002 to demonstrate that the context of the Valley was very different from Ladakh or Jammu. The CSDS survey certainly shows the lack of legitimacy of electoral processes in the Kashmir administrative division and the coercion of voters, mainly by the security forces (to participate in the elections) but also by militants (to not take part in the electoral process). Lokniti, Centre for the Study of Development Societies, *Jammu and Kashmir Assembly Election 2002. Findings of A Post-Poll Survey*. I thank the library personnel of the CSDS for locating this material for me.

decide.⁴⁸ Nationalist leaders from the Valley have occasionally participated in talks with Pandits and Ladakhi Buddhists, which could be qualified as more symbolic than substantive. There is resentment between the religious communities because of past violence. Muslims from the Valley have been blamed for their lack of support of other minorities and for being unable to include them in their demands. This view helps sustain the 'ethnic' character of the dispute, by which Kashmiri Muslims are held responsible for wanting to 'leave India' and causing trouble for those who think differently. However, it lacks proper contextualization because it does not approach the political question in terms of the representation of the community, that is, the future of those living in the territories. In other words, the question is not who is a Kashmiri, but who wants to take part in a certain political project.

If the community is not able to represent itself, or this possibility is denied, it cannot embrace membership. A young Kashmiri science professor, a returnee from New York, is a good example of this aspect, which I also found reflected among the younger generations. In our meeting she narrated how her research at the time (in 2010) looked at similarities between architectural construction patterns in the Valley and in Ladakh.

There are many links within the various regions [of Jammu and Kashmir] that we are not aware of. This is because of the disconnection due to the lack of communications. There is only one weekly flight between Srinagar and Leh [in 2010] in contrast to the growing number of connections from Srinagar and Leh to India. But we also do not have the opportunity to talk to each other or have an interest in each other. Disconnection is privileged over connectivity.

During the meeting she recalled how people expressed solidarity by helping each other in the aftermath of the Valley's blockade of July 2008. She said there was a scarcity of some products in the market because the only highway to Jammu and the rest of India was cut off by Jammu Hindu chauvinist groups in protest over developments in the Amarnath land transfer. On that occasion, ordinary people had helped with the distribution of food. Similar views were expressed by other interviewees, who often had difficulty spelling out the Kashmir issue in territorial terms.

Therefore, unlike the general understanding of the dispute that maintains that Kashmir is about the borders of 1947 and which state owns the area, or about making the area independent, I argue that the issue is instead about

48 Interview, Srinagar, 12 July 2012.

the representation of the community and the impossibility of having a thorough debate among those affected. Conflict is perceived as a matter of uncertainty because of the way it is materialized as a permanent legal state of exception. Although 'legal' mobility in and out of Srinagar is possible, and even encouraged in specific directions, it is aimed at transforming the exceptional context into a 'normal' one in a way that allows no room for resistance or the incorporation of dissent. Representation of the community is no longer possible because normality implies connections to distant places – migrant and religious networks, international finances, visits to tourist sites in India, and so on – rather than the possibility of revisiting what is perceived as nearby, in the vicinity.

Muzaffarabad: the place of refuge and support of the Kashmir cause

The city

In spite of the current disconnection, urban locations in the Kashmir borderland on either side of the LoC share a number of links with each other, in part due to past historical ties but also to the dynamics of conflict since Partition. Muzaffarabad was a district of the Kashmir province before 1947 and since the sixteenth century had developed as a secondary town, originally connecting the Valley with major trading routes toward Central Asia and then, at the end of the nineteenth century, acting as a main route to access the Valley.⁴⁹ Past connections are still present in the urban landscape, such as in the case of descendants of *khwaja* Kashmiris (Kashmiri-speaking traders) from the Valley who settled there in previous centuries to take advantage of trading opportunities. The *Khwaja* bazaar in the old city is a reminder of their presence. Other groups include Hindko speakers from neighbouring areas of the Jhelum and Hazara, who are culturally connected to Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), and Paharis from the mountains to the east (in the direction of the Kashmir Valley) who have traditional links to both the Valley and Punjab. There are also other small religious communities such as a few Bahai'i families with cultural ties to Gulf migration, Christians originally from Punjab, and refugees from Afghanistan who moved there in search of economic opportunities. The social diversity of Muzaffarabad

49 At the time of research, Muzaffarabad was known as one of the three Divisions of AJK, consisting of the districts of Muzaffarabad and Neelum.

is attributed to its frontier character over centuries. Partition brought a divide that led settled Hindu and Sikh communities to flee, but a degree of social diversity still persists in the city.⁵⁰

Muzaffarabad was almost destroyed by an earthquake on 8 October 2005. The disaster caused around 75,000 deaths, most of them in AJK where the city is located. National and international response was quick – although this was partly motivated, as in the case of US agencies, by security concerns.⁵¹ In fact, as Schütte and Kreutzmann point out, ‘4 years after the earthquake, most agencies had already withdrawn from the area’ and in 2015 some of the affected areas were still far from recovered.⁵² At the time of my visits in 2009 and 2010, a significant part of the city centre had been rebuilt. The urban landscape looked like a site ‘under construction’ in which international donors such as Saudi Arabia, Sweden, Turkey, and NGOs provided support by building housing and healthcare, education, and water and sanitation facilities.⁵³ The reconstruction, following a plan elaborated by Japanese engineers and architects, was intended to build a modern city able to attract foreign capital, as described to me by an officer of the State Earthquake Reconstruction & Rehabilitation Agency (SERRA) in March 2010. Indeed, the city was not only being rebuilt: major infrastructure projects were being developed throughout the district, such as hydroelectric projects at the confluence of the Neelum and Jhelum rivers, which involved a consortium of several international companies, and in the Jhelum at Hattian/Kohala, undertaken by a Chinese company. The entire district seemed to be under construction, conveying a sense of ‘opening’, substantiated by the presence of foreign workers and investors. However this view contrasted with what appeared to be a strengthening of bureaucratic measures to enter the territory – the need for a Non-Objection Certificate, or NOC, for foreigners – and, judging from comments made by interviewees, with the tight control that Pakistani security agencies were exercising over the population at the time.⁵⁴

50 For a historical account, see Mehta, ‘This happened’, 1–41.

51 Schütte and Kreutzmann, ‘Linking relief’, 6; Wilder, ‘Aid and stability’.

52 Schütte and Kreutzmann, ‘Linking relief’, 6. See also Jillani, ‘Kashmir earthquake’.

53 In fact, the Turkish premier Recep Tayyip Erdogan visited the area several times. Naqash, ‘Turkey’s help’. See also Government of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, ‘Briefing on Reconstruction’.

54 After the 2005 earthquake, access to AJK became easy because bureaucratic controls were relaxed. This changed a few years later, partly because the Pakistani authorities wanted to preserve their control over the Kashmir policy and partly because of the use of AJK’s soil by terrorist organizations, which were seen as embarrassing for the international image of Pakistan’s fight against terrorism.

Unlike Srinagar, Muzaffarabad is difficult to access for foreigners, particularly for those wishing to undertake field research.⁵⁵ Bureaucratic processes to apply for the required permits are not always clearly stated. This situation explains why, with the exception of a few remarkable academic works in English and published material in Urdu by Pakistani and Azad Kashmiri authors, there is a lack of research in the social sciences and humanities on this otherwise fascinating area. The University of Azad Kashmir has produced a few publications addressing questions of culture and society, but this scholarly lacuna cannot be dissociated from the political situation.⁵⁶ For these reasons my fieldwork in Muzaffarabad was limited to a few weeks during two visits, although I carried out additional interviews with AJK residents in Islamabad and Rawalpindi.

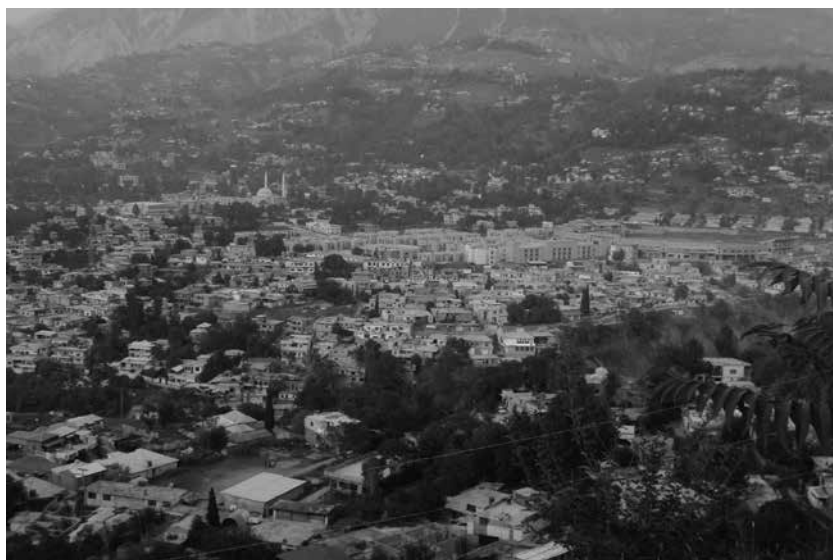
Muzaffarabad seems like a separate place, different from other Pakistani cities, but not so different. In a sense, the urban space tends to emulate at a symbolic level the federal (semi-independent) status of Azad Kashmir as part of Pakistan, framed in The Azad Jammu and Kashmir Interim Constitution Act of 1974.⁵⁷ A series of bureaucratic measures have been implemented to convey this idea that it is located in a different kind of territory, such as the requirement for the aforementioned NOC for foreigners issued by the Pakistani Ministry of Interior and the need to travel there through the 'official' border point to enter AJK territory, the payment of border customs (or taxes) for Pakistanis having business with AJK, and inspections by the security forces. This legal-bureaucratic separation of Muzaffarabad, which is designed to resemble entering a 'foreign' territory, contrasts with the experience of cultural continuity that many outsiders have noticed during their visits to the city. A language professor from AJK University explained in an interview that there is no dominant cultural group in the area and hybridism characterizes life in public spaces and in everyday interactions. Azad Kashmiris may not be very different from Pakistanis in cultural and social terms, but they are represented as a different collective. In Muzaffarabad, the absence of Pakistani symbols such as flags and government information banners contrasts with the overwhelming presence of informative posters

55 For a detailed discussion on this issue, see Robinson, *Refugees*, 41-45.

56 An example is the *Kashmir Journal of Language Research* published by the Department of English.

57 This repealed the 1970 Act, by which the Pakistani Government allowed the introduction of a parliamentary system through the creation of a lower house or Legislative Assembly. It also established an Azad Kashmir Council based in Islamabad 'to perform the functions of Federal set-up, with the same subjects at its disposal, as the Federal Government of Pakistan has vis-a-vis [sic] the Provinces'. Gilani, *Constitutional Development*, x-xi.

Image 3.2 A view of Muzaffarabad city in September 2009.



Photograph by Antía Mato Bouzas

by the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Government announcing their premises and the activities they undertake. This idea that Muzaffarabad is a place distinct from Pakistan, yet at the same time undifferentiated from it, is also reflected in the way the conflict is manifested.

The conflict

During a visit to a local NGO working on education for women outside Muzaffarabad, I was accompanied by a young man from Baltistan who had worked in rescue activities in AJK following the earthquake and who, as a student, became my assistant during the trip. Along with him, there was a middle-aged man from another region of Pakistan who was assigned to me for security reasons, since I had to travel a few kilometres outside the city and it was unclear whether my NOC was valid for that area. On the way back, we had a conversation in Urdu about general aspects of the landscape. At some point, the man pointed out a settlement across the Jhelum river that looked like any other village to me. He explained that those living there were refugees (he used the English term) from the Kashmir Valley and then began talking to my assistant. They became engaged in a conversation on the status of refugees in which I did not intervene. After some time

there was a silence and my assistant told me in English: 'You know, these refugees have many privileges, the Government [Azad Kashmir] gives them 15,000 rupees for the birth of a child and they receive other benefits. Just because they are from the other side, but they have been living here for many years. This is not good.' I began to argue with him in English to try to understand the meaning of his words, and I asked the other man's opinion in Urdu. Both were unhappy with the authorities' decision to privilege the refugees over the local population. Their criticism, however, was directed at the existence of a separate Azad Kashmir Government and not expressed as a form of racism against the displaced people. They both criticized the existing context, that is, the support of the Kashmiri nationalist movement and its fight over Kashmir, on the basis that it was more of a burden than an advantage for Pakistan. These views are not rare in the Pakistani context despite the official propaganda on Kashmir, but it was interesting to hear that people from the Pakistani security establishment operating in AJK (such as the man who accompanied us) were of the same opinion.

The understanding of the Kashmir dispute in Muzaffarabad can be presented as a display of Kashmiriness (in the sense of an attachment to the dispute) in public and private spaces despite the fact that residents cannot openly express their opinion about the independence for whole of Kashmir or criticize the Pakistani state. The common issue of certain AJK elites sympathizing with Pakistan is that, unlike in the Valley, there is political freedom in AJK, a statement to which anyone visiting the area can object. Other critical voices complained about the lack of freedom of expression in AJK because the question of independence cannot be publicly addressed. The scarce human rights reports on AJK also confirm this lack of basic freedoms.⁵⁸ The Azad Kashmir Government and legislative assembly are the political institutions that represent a 'liberated' zone, set against the 'occupied' Kashmir Valley – even though the region is actually at the mercy of Pakistan, which exercises significant control through security and non-security means. This can be seen in the way that the activities of the Azad Kashmiri bureaucracy are monitored by the Pakistani state regarding sensitive matters such as the control of water resources and the development of hydroelectric projects.

In a meeting with a high-ranking bureaucrat in the Azad Kashmir Government, I was informed about problems in the negotiations with Pakistani authorities concerning the Neelum-Jhelum hydroelectric project which

58 Human Rights Watch, 'Friends like these'.

was being built at the time. According to him, the initial project plan had negatively impacted Azad Kashmir because, although the dam was to be built on AJK soil, the energy produced would be mainly for consumption in Pakistan. In his view this initial plan deprived AJK of appropriate economic compensation in the form of royalties. During the interview, this officer said that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) of the Government of Azad Kashmir had rejected the project plan because it would affect the provision of water for Muzaffarabad district. Moreover, he criticized the Pakistani authorities for what he saw as interference in AJK affairs. In the middle of our interview, when this bureaucrat was narrating the case, a man came into the office and sat next to the door listening to our conversation. Toward the end of our meeting, in what I interpreted as an attempt to please the unidentified listener, the officer pointed out that 'thanks to the Pakistani Government' the most problematic aspects of this hydroelectric project had been solved. The few bureaucrats I was able to interview (mostly from offices dealing with cultural and social issues) all made some references to the limits to freedom of speech before they agreed to talk. Other scholars have also noticed this dissatisfaction among AJK bureaucrats, which indicates the limited ability of the Azad Government to act as an independent institution.⁵⁹

Within this general context, it is possible to distinguish urban manifestations that connect the restricted political atmosphere of AJK with the conflict in the Kashmir Valley. One concerns the 'separate' legal condition of AJK as a part of Pakistan, which situates the area in a constitutional limbo. Pakistan treats AJK as a semi-independent state at a formal level, despite its lack of recognition by the international community. The reality, however, is that Pakistan intervenes in the region at all levels and locals cannot oppose it. As a non-formal sovereign territory, AJK resembles what Elden describes as the consequences of a dissociation between sovereignty and territory, as an area which, owing to its legal limbo, is subject to exploitation for several purposes.⁶⁰ Pakistani actors such as the intelligence agencies, the military, and Islamist groups – acting in unison or separately – have used this territory to launch their activities on the Indian side, for which they claim no direct responsibility. At the same time, the legal vacuum allows infrastructural projects such as dams to be carried out without opposition in a very small territory (compared with the size of other Pakistani provinces) where there is a lot of pressure on scarce resources.

59 Snedden, *The Untold Story*, 162.

60 Elden, *Terror and Territory*, 60-61, 169.

Another manifestation of the relationship with the conflict in the Kashmir Valley is displacement. The refugees from the other side of the LoC fled from violence in different periods, ranging from Partition to the early 1990s.⁶¹ Among them, there are more settled groups of Kashmiri speakers who moved mainly in the 1950s and 1960s, and Paharis living in the nearby mountain areas who, despite living on the east side of the LoC, historically had more interaction with Muzaffarabad. At the time I visited the city in March 2010, there were still a few refugee camps inhabited by those who had arrived in the early 1990s.⁶² While field research within the camp was not allowed at the time, it was possible to speak with some residents outside the compounds. Most of those living in the camps were Paharis who faced many practical difficulties in terms of access to work, healthcare, and education, apart from their physical and legal 'confinement' in these secluded places.⁶³ Their fate differed substantially from the impression shared by my assistant and the Pakistani agent described above, who considered them privileged compared with the rest of the local population. The reality I encountered coincided more with the way refugee groups are normally seen by receiving societies: as competitors for scarce resources. The existence of this displaced population from the other side of the LoC is a reminder of how the conflict dynamics of AJK are interconnected with the Kashmir Valley. Their case shows that Kashmiriness, as an attachment to the Kashmir dispute and not in the sense of identity, is articulated as a relationship with place. However, this relationship is not restricted to an ethnic expression, to bounded territory, but a relationship with a specific location called 'home', and therefore is expressed in terms of belonging.

The involvement of the Pakistani intelligence services in the support of militancy in the Kashmir Valley and its fuelling of *jihadi* organizations has been well documented.⁶⁴ However, the question of how this context affects the position of AJK residents and the displaced population has

61 The United Nations Commissioner for India and Pakistan Josef Korbel located the figure of 'refugees' in Pakistan and the Azad territory after the ceasefire of 1 January 1949 at 525,000, of which 150,000 were in Azad territory. Korbel, *Danger in Kashmir*, 153. Khalid Rahman and Ershad Mahmud identify four waves of migration since 1947. The latest one, between 1990 and 1994, involved some 10,000 people. 'Kashmiri Refugees', 43-67.

62 For a more detailed work, see Robinson, *Refugees*, 356-365.

63 As Robinson has demonstrated, residents of the camps participate in militancy across the LoC and this might be the reason for the restrictions on entering these places imposed by the authorities. *Ibid.*, 363-364.

64 The investigative journalism work by Cathy Scott-Clark and Adrian Levy, *The Siege*, provides a fairly accurate idea of the context. See also Evans, 'Kashmir insurgency'.

garnered little attention.⁶⁵ Militancy has received support among the exiled community in AJK and in other Pakistani cities, but this has not been true of the rest of the population of AJK. A few non-Kashmiris with whom I interacted in Muzaffarabad saw 'Kashmir' (and more generally the whole problem with India) as a burden on their lives.⁶⁶ The international pressure on the Pakistani state to close down the training camps of *jihadi* organizations in AJK may have also affected the ways residents thought about the activities of these organizations in their territory.⁶⁷ It is not an accident that Muzaffarabad drew international attention in December 2008 following a crackdown on Lashkar-e-Taiba members for their participation in the Mumbai attacks on 26 November of that year.⁶⁸ Several people were detained in the city and its outskirts, and the media depicted the place as dangerous, with terrorist groups roaming freely and preparing for action elsewhere. Yet the exploitation of AJK's territory by Pakistan also defines the contours of the dispute and imposes a certain narrative that suppresses the most problematic aspects of the relationship of Azad Kashmir with Pakistan.

The borders of the conflict

As in the case of Srinagar, the borders of 'the Kashmir issue' in Muzaffarabad are characterized by an element of uncertainty, although framed in slightly different terms. Whereas in Srinagar there is a publicly articulated sentiment that 'a decision has to happen', in Muzaffarabad such a possibility is expressed in ambiguous terms. This reality is connected with Pakistan's handling of the 'disputed' status of AJK by being the key mediator for Azad Kashmiris internationally, as well as exercising great control over affairs locally. The Pakistani military bureaucracy that controls the country favours the merger of Kashmir with Pakistan over the creation of an independent state. In fact, the oath of office of the president, the government, and members of the legislative assembly of Azad Kashmir includes the formula: 'I will remain loyal to the country and the cause of accession of the State of

65 An exception is the anthropological work by Cabeiri deBergh Robinson, *Body of Victim*.

66 I refer to people without ties across the LoC. This excludes the Pahari community in southern AJK and its diaspora in the UK, who have actively mobilized for the Kashmir cause.

67 In January 2002 Pakistan banned Lashkar-e-Taiba following US pressure, but the organization continues to function by changing its name and shifting its activity from Pakistan (state) territory to the more constitutionally undefined Azad Kashmir, on the grounds that the ban did not apply there. Zahab, 'Door of paradise', 149-150.

68 Shah, 'Pakistan arrests'.

Jammu and Kashmir to Pakistan'.⁶⁹ Pro-independence parties, such as the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), are barred from participating in the political process because they advocate the merger of the divided parts and the independence of the combined whole.

This scenario is to some extent reproduced in the society. The exiled and displaced people with whom I interacted were mainly concerned about their home areas across the LoC and saw Kashmir more as a question about the divided territories than an issue of integration into Pakistan. Among the local residents with whom I spoke, such as a female politician from Mirpur, the focus was on the future of the Kashmir Valley and its reunion with AJK, rather than the merging of AJK with Pakistan. For others, such as a group of Hindko speakers with whom I talked at length, Kashmir was not an issue of interest. Although these views cannot be generalized, they reflect a range of positions on how things are perceived in Muzaffarabad. They illustrate a complex scenario which, as in the case of Srinagar, indicates that there is a significant gap between the representation of the dispute and the living of the conflict. The reality is that, as in Srinagar, in Muzaffarabad people do not have a say in the political issues that affect them.

However, pro-Pakistani sentiments do exist among a section of the population. On my way to Muzaffarabad from Rawalpindi in a minibus in July 2010, I had a conversation with a fellow traveller, a middle-aged migrant worker returning for Ramadan to his village near Muzaffarabad after staying two years in Saudi Arabia. At a certain point, while descending to the mountain resort town of Murree following the zigzag of the road and seeing the Jhelum river and the Kohala bridge on our left, he exclaimed, pointing with his eyes and hand to the other side: '*Yeh Pakistan pe panchwan ki subah banega*' ('This should become the fifth province of Pakistan'). Given the context, I did not dare ask the meaning of his words, but I sensed from his account of his hard life as a migrant that he was uncomfortable with the state of things regarding AJK and Pakistan. Snedden, who has conducted exhaustive work on AJK, points out that historically 'Azad Kashmiris had always wanted to be part of this nation [Pakistan]' and that 'most Azad Kashmiris have not considered any option other than joining India or Pakistan' despite the autocratic treatment of the region by Pakistan.⁷⁰ While certainly the historical argument is correct and ordinary people in Azad Kashmir may not object to becoming part of Pakistan, this does not mean they cannot contemplate options other than merging with Pakistan. The

69 Khan, *The Interim Constitution*, 61-63.

70 Snedden, *Untold Story*, 109-110.

domestic context of AJK is far more complex, as shown in some human rights reports.⁷¹ In my interactions, I sensed that discontent with Pakistan, caused by various concerns, cannot be seen as a marginal sentiment. The point to consider is how people can articulate their political opinions in public in such a vulnerable context. On the one hand, the Pakistani military controls the area and has its own strategic agendas by which locals become victims or are involved in erratic military operations. On the other hand, if the Pakistani army were to vacate AJK, many fear that there would be retaliation by the Indian state.

Tensions between the AJK Government and Pakistan do sometimes arise, but critical sections of the AJK administration and groups in the society articulate them in the form of a complaint to the Pakistani state for its interference in affairs that should be addressed internally. Open confrontation with Pakistan is not possible, partly due to the unequal strengths in the relationship and partly because a section of AJK's population is sympathetic to the possibility of a merger with Pakistan. This can be seen in moments of crisis, such as the judicial stand-off that occurred in April 2010 after the removal of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Supreme Court Chief Justice by the Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir, only to have the Chief Justice be reinstated in the post by the President of Azad Kashmir (both politicians are from the dominant party, the Muslim Conference). Another judge of the AJK Supreme Court had filed a petition in the Supreme Court of Pakistan about the Chief Justice's eligibility for that position, by claiming to be the most senior judge. Moreover, the post of Chief Justice was challenged in the AJK Supreme Court by a local lawyer whose petition was dismissed.⁷² Demonstrations in the streets of Muzaffarabad protested against what was seen as interference in AJK's domestic affairs by Pakistan, with protestors insisting that the Supreme Court of Pakistan had no jurisdiction over AJK. The tension during this period was evidence of the sensitive nature of AJK's relations with Pakistan and Pakistan's 'continuous meddling in the AJK affairs', as some of my interviewees commented privately. During one demonstration in March 2010 along the main Secretariat Road in the government area of Muzaffarabad, I sensed open criticism of Pakistan's interference in domestic affairs in the demonstrators' banners and slogans, but they did not mention Pakistan on them.

From the perspective of Muzaffarabad, there are two major spatial inconsistencies in the understanding of Kashmir. One is how the AJK's

71 Human Rights Watch, 'Friends like these'.

72 Mahmud, 'Judicial crisis'.

relationship with the Kashmir Valley hampers debate on other relations that are vital for the development of this territory, in terms of the potential merger with Pakistan or the attainment of independence. The other, related, inconsistency concerns the preservation of the AJK as a 'separate' entity, exemplified in paraphernalia such as the administrative and security controls (border posts) at Kohala, the symbolic representation of the AJK as unrelated to Pakistan, and the tight control of the population and of movement within AJK. In this regard, what characterizes Muzaffarabad is that despite the underlying idea of 'being a disputed territory' but at the same time 'liberated' (*azad* or 'free'), freedom is limited by the impossibility of those living there to decide their own political future and, in many cases, even to talk openly about it.

Conclusion

The urban dynamics of Muzaffarabad and Srinagar show the interdependencies created over time by the Kashmir dispute and the centrality of these places in the conflict. Manifestations of the conflict in the urban landscape highlight the problematic role of the state in promoting a dominant narrative that undermines the views of those affected. As in other twin cities separated by Partition, such as Lahore and Amritsar and Mumbai and Hyderabad (Pakistan), developments in Srinagar and Muzaffarabad have impacted each other.⁷³ However, their relationship is better described as one of 'dependence', rather than 'twin' in the sense of similar or equal. Srinagar, once an economic centre and a place of refuge for other groups following the closing of borders in the neighbourhood, has exiled part of its population, who sought refuge in Muzaffarabad and other places across the LoC in Pakistan. Others left the Valley's capital because of the need to find opportunities in India and abroad. Despite the destruction caused by the conflict, Srinagar has experienced an important economic transformation and the influx of money (not necessarily from transparent sources) is constant. However, conflict endures and has the potential, as in 2007, 2010-2011, and 2016, to dominate the urban landscape.

Unrest in the Kashmir Valley affects developments in AJK despite the lack of open confrontation in the society. The Government of Pakistan supports the holding of a plebiscite and, less enthusiastically, the self-determination of Kashmir. However, expressions of dissent against Pakistan and the

73 Talbot, *Divided Cities*; Aggarwal, *Sindh: Stories*.

mobilization of sentiments for independence are not allowed in public, and indeed strong measures are taken to prevent this from occurring. Interviewees in Muzaffarabad are aware that the future of AJK is closely linked to developments across the border. This is not the case in Srinagar, because there is a significant political movement, backed by the society, that challenges both Indian and Pakistani narratives of the dispute. In other words, the Kashmir Valley is more important for the political claims of AJK than vice versa. At the same time, Muzaffarabad, and AJK in general, is economically more vulnerable than Srinagar because of its limited resources and communication links.

In short, the perspectives on the dispute from these two cities show a degree of interdependence between the divided parts due to the conflict dynamics, but not a unitary view of the dispute. The framing of the dispute in each place is a function of a set of interdependencies. While in Azad Kashmir it is the relationship with the Pakistani state and its frontier character, with no dominant group determining political developments – among other issues – that frames the dispute, in Srinagar it is the context of militarization that determines life conditions, apart from the existence of a shared sentiment in the society about the need to ascertain their own political future.

4 Urban Areas Near the LoC (II)

The 'Kashmir Issue' in Skardu and Kargil

Abstract

Skardu and Kargil are sparsely populated cities that are formally located in the disputed territory, but their residents do not feel part of the conflict and state that they suffer 'because of the Valley'. Civilians from these areas have not participated in the dynamics of violence and confrontation between the Indian and Pakistani armies. However, their locations near the LoC create a precarious existence for urban dwellers on both sides because they are subjected to restrictive rules that affect their basic rights and their loyalty to the nation is often questioned. The perspective on the conflict from these 'marginal' sites underscores the interwoven character of the dispute. Despite ongoing bordering processes and the long-term dispute that has reinforced social borders between groups, cities in the Kashmir borderland can still be seen as socially diverse places.

Keywords: Kashmir issue, Skardu, Kargil, peripheries, social heterogeneity, immobility

Not all the places that are involved in the Kashmir dispute have the same importance for the states of India and Pakistan and for an eventual agreement on a territorial settlement. As has been described in the previous chapter, the Kashmir Valley plays a central role and AJK is tightly linked to the conflict, but other areas such as Gilgit-Baltistan and Ladakh can be considered marginal.¹ This does not mean that they are not affected by the conflict dynamics – they are, though in a different way – but the people living in these territories do not feel attached to the political problems in the Kashmir Valley and AJK. Residents of Skardu and Kargil are aware that

¹ Only those defending the 'sanctity' of the boundaries of the former princely state as of October 1947 can give them equal importance.

the dispute is 'because of the Valley' and generally see themselves as having a marginal role in the whole question despite suffering from it.

There are cultural and social differences that explain this situation, apart from the incapacity of Kashmiri nationalism to mobilize people in these areas to undertake a united political project. For those in Baltistan and Ladakh, the link with Kashmir is their conquest by the Dogra chiefs of Jammu and then, after the formation of the princely state, their incorporation as part of that political entity. Nation-building after Partition was marked by the dynamics of the confrontation between India and Pakistan, which contributed to sentiments of disenfranchisement among these populations. However, while in Baltistan (and Gilgit-Baltistan) a sense of exclusion from the Pakistani state has prevailed over time, in Kargil (Ladakh's border district) incorporation has been the norm. While Kargilis decide their representatives in the state and national elections, in Baltistan they are able to choose representatives for a regional assembly with very limited power, but are banned from representation in Pakistan's national assembly.² Despite these differences, border populations on both sides of the LoC are largely co-opted by their respective authorities through an economy of dependence based on compensations, including subsidies on basic products and jobs in the administration.

Geography has also contributed to the differentiation of access to these sparsely populated areas because of poor communication links with other parts of India and Pakistan. This is exemplified by Kargil town, which is partially cut off from the Kashmir Valley in winter. The closest civilian airport, accessible by a relatively well-paved road, is across the LoC in Skardu, but people cannot go there. In addition to these features, the huge military presence in Kargil compared with the small number of civilians makes it difficult to express dissent in public. Skardu and Kargil are considered peripheral locations in the Kashmir dispute, but they are places very much inscribed into the politics of the conflict, as indicated by the Kargil War that took place in this northern part of the LoC in 1999. Pakistan used Skardu to train the militants who were later deployed along the mountain peaks in Kargil to simulate a guerrilla attack in 1999. The conflict lasted for several months during the summer and received wide international attention until it ended after unofficial US mediation.

Conflict in this border area is essentially about fighting between the Indian and Pakistani armies. In contrast to the situation in the Kashmir Valley and AJK, civilians in this area have not been involved in violent or

2 Bhan, *Counterinsurgency*, 11. On Baltistan, see Mato Bouzas, 'Mixed legacies'.

anti-state activities and do not generally sympathize with the nationalist cause, although they do tend to disagree with the present border regime because it separates families and groups sharing various ties. Indeed, it is in this area where the dividing character of the LoC is most strongly felt. The majority of the population of Skardu and Kargil share the same language, a dialect of western Tibetan, and belong to the Twelver Shia sect of Islam. Historically, Skardu was the main centre of religious learning for Kargili Muslims but Kargil was economically more important due to its location along the trading routes to Central Asia, which extended to Skardu through a secondary network via Parkuta (a Buddhist name, later renamed Mehdiabad).

The conflict dynamics in Skardu and Kargil must be understood in the context of being part of the Kashmir dispute and the position of the area at the margins of two large states. Despite the absence of open violence, conflict manifests at a latent level, as a fluid barrier between what can and cannot be expressed and done in public. An analysis of these urban places means acknowledging a set of historically created interdependencies, but also being aware that events in one place have the potential to have an impact on the other.

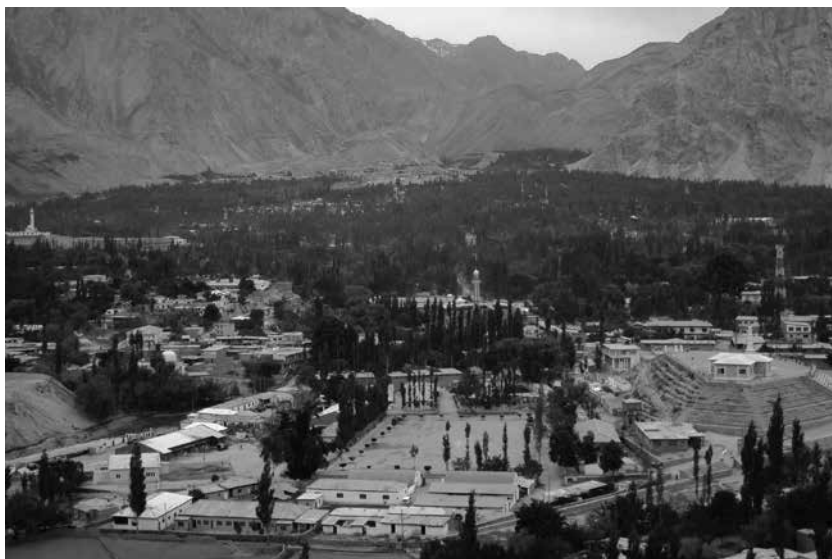
As in the previous chapter, I provide a brief description of these two small cities within the legal-administrative regimes of the territories in which they are located. I then discuss the social diversity of these places despite their remote and marginal location and the mobility/immobility of urban dwellers. In the analysis, I include opinions about the Kashmir dispute expressed by urban residents that reflect on the status of their territories as part of the dispute.

The specific position of Skardu as a non-Kashmiri and non-Pakistani location

The city

Skardu, the district headquarters of the Baltistan Division, one of the two Divisions of Gilgit-Baltistan, has a population of 131,290 according to the census of 2017.³ It is located in a deep valley some 130 kilometres from the LoC, well outside the restricted military zone, and is surrounded by mountains that are more than 5000 metres high. Before 1948, when Skardu became part

3 At the time of writing at the end of 2018, the 2017 Census reports for Gilgit-Baltistan and AJK have not been published, but this figure was provided informally during an interview in Skardu (28 June 2018) with an NGO.

Image 4.1 Skardu, August 2009

Photograph by Antía Mato Bouzas

of the liberated areas controlled by Pakistan, it was a garrison town defended by a battalion of the maharaja.⁴ Its military character as a 'fort' has not changed much since then; the two existing army cantonments that occupy an important part of the city are a reminder of this condition. Although physically separated from civilians by the walls of their camps, the army presence has a significant impact on urban social and economic relations. Along with the government administration, the army is an important source of employment (as masons, bearers, and porters; through the recruitment of local soldiers, etc.), is the main group contracting specific services (food supplies, transport, road infrastructures), and also provides facilities for civilians.⁵ Moreover, a significant number of locals have been enrolled in the institution over the decades and there is a Cadet College in the city which has a role as a potential recruiter.

4 Mahajan, *Debacle in Baltistan*, 16-20.

5 In interviews held in Skardu I came to know, for example, that young single working men from villages or towns without proper arrangements in town frequently eat at the army mess because it is more convenient for them. Similarly, I often heard that in border areas the army usually supplies kerosene and food, either free or at low prices, as a goodwill gesture to the population. This also occurs on the Indian side of the border, where the army takes an 'activist' role, see Bhan, *Counterinsurgency*, 159-163.

As the capital of Baltistan, Skardu is considered the cultural centre of the Balti identity, which is framed in terms of a perceived disadvantage vis-à-vis Gilgit in regional affairs (because high positions in Baltistan's administration tend to be occupied by Gilgitis or Punjabis) and also in relation to Kashmir and to Pakistan. This Balti identity is a cross-LoC phenomenon, since it is claimed on both sides of the border on the grounds of shared ties.⁶ Cultural elements and shared traditions form part of this identity. Interestingly, Shia Islam, which is espoused by people on both sides of the LoC, does not play a major role in this shared identity.⁷ Balti cultural groups make broader transregional claims on the basis of the region's former ties with Tibet.⁸ However, across the border in Kargil, Tibetan elements are problematic and links to Baltistan are expressed on the basis of former ties (when there was no border) and surrounding the question of forced separation. Baltistan identity has also developed out of a sense of deprivation and as a socio-economic response challenging the marginal position of this territory in Pakistan.⁹

These identity claims must be contextualized as a reaction to Baltistan's landlocked condition. They certainly involve elements of 'awareness' and the imagination of a community in the terms discussed by Benedict Anderson, although they are articulated as a way to underscore an element of connectivity and multiple belonging. This is not only a case of claiming past ties with Tibet, but also a display of symbolic attachments in the public space that demonstrate Baltistan's linkages with other territories. The latter can be seen in shop signs written in the Tibetan and Arab-Persian alphabets; images of the Iranian politicians Ruhollah Khomeini, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, and Hassan Rouhani in the streets and shops which show the importance of the Iranian revolution and the shared Shia religious tradition, and graffiti containing slogans about ongoing issues in world politics. Cultural activists, development organizations, religious groups, tour operators, and businessmen are involved in this spatial production that attempts to challenge the landlocked position of Baltistan district by demanding more communication and economic links across the surrounding

6 As is the Pahari identity of those living in the mountain areas to the west of the Kashmir Valley.

7 There are religious ties among families on both sides of the border, especially among clerical families, but religion per se is not publicly articulated in this revival of Balti identity. In fact, although they do not conceal their religious identity, some of the cultural activists I interviewed in Baltistan are concerned with the development of the Tibetan alphabet for the Balti language and popular traditions which are pre-Islamic.

8 Mato Bouzas, 'Territorialisation'; MacDonald, 'Memories of Tibet'.

9 Mato Bouzas, 'Space(s) and place(s)'.

borders. However, past ties with the Kashmir Valley are silenced in this urban landscape.¹⁰

Skardu qualifies as a border city in the sense that it is very much affected by the 'politics of the LoC', but not all residents agree with this definition. During my first visit in 2009, one of my interviewees, a local poet in his mid-thirties involved in cultural programmes, objected to my terming of Skardu as a border urban area in the following way: 'when there is conflict, fighting does not reach here. We are safe. It is our soldiers who are stationed there [at the border] and we are preoccupied for them, as it happened during the conflict [the Kargil war]. At that time, our people got involved preparing food, helping with supplies. The army was defending us and there were many local soldiers among them. But direct conflict never reached us.'¹¹ However, this view contradicts other experiences of proximity to the border, such as a man working in the healthcare sector who made reference to a local episode during our meeting: 'The border is just two hours away and then Kargil is just there, whereas Gilgit is at a six hours distance by road. Our relatives [he meant divided families] are just on the other side and we cannot meet. Do you think is this normal? What they [India and Pakistan] have done to us?'¹² Although it is not strictly located at the border, these comments illustrate how border dynamics in Skardu play an ambivalent role in local discourse: the border is seen both as protection from an enemy, which is framed as the Other, and as a barrier impeding 'us' from reuniting. People from Skardu emphasize a sense of proximity to the border when they refer to the separation of divided families and the sharing of cultural ties, while also stressing that the town is located at a safe distance when discussing the potential of border fighting.

The existence of a provisional border, whose status is yet to be ascertained, creates a context of legal ambiguity for those living 'within the borders' of the former princely state. In other words, the blurred character of the LoC reinforces the mental map of the borders of the Jammu and Kashmir princely

10 Baltis were a significant labour force (as coolies) in the building of major infrastructures such as the Baglihar dam, near Srinagar, and there was significant past economic interaction connected to the Kashmir Valley. As of summer 2012, there were still remains of a Sikh temple and a building remembered as the place where the maharaja's officers stayed during their military campaigns toward the north, as locals described them. A few narrow lanes where Sikhs used to live and have their shops are the only remains of a once more plural space. On the history of Baltis as a labour force, see MacDonald, 'Push and shove'. In Skardu there are also families identified by their Kashmir ancestors.

11 Interview, Skardu, 27 August 2009.

12 Interview, Skardu, 25 March 2010.

state by providing them with an entity that no longer exists at the material level. This can be seen in the way the Pakistani state approaches the fate of AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan, keeping these territories constitutionally separate from the state while de facto exercising strict control over them. However, unlike AJK, where the Kashmir issue is officially sanctioned by the existence of a government that acts 'in exile', in Gilgit-Baltistan 'Kashmir' has been the obstacle preventing the integration of the region into Pakistan and allowing the continuation of a form of colonial administration there for decades.¹³ While in places like Skardu there is a shared agreement that a decision has to be taken on the resolution of the dispute, the mental maps of those I interviewed reflect more of a preoccupation with the present and the future than with the past.

The conflict

As in the case of Gilgit (and AJK), Baltistan became a 'liberated' area during the events surrounding the disintegration of the former princely state.¹⁴ The maharaja's troops stationed in Skardu at the time suffered a siege by the rebel guerrillas and were later murdered along with Sikh civilians who had sought their protection. During the siege, the city was divided in two along the former water channel, which is still in existence.¹⁵ The events surrounding this episode have left a strong impression in the local memory and are still a sensitive topic. People with some knowledge of the developments are reluctant to talk about them, because this exercise implies addressing the involvement of local families which, in some cases, can be their own relatives. During a conversation with a well-educated man in his sixties, he reflected on the past with a strong sense of embarrassment, telling me about the fate of two Sikh women, one of them married to an officer of the maharaja's troops stationed in Skardu and whose only child was brutally killed. Both women were then abducted and forcefully married to local men and converted to Islam.¹⁶

13 By 'colonial' I refer to the preservation of pre-1947 legal and representative forms in the administration; I do not mean, as some Indian scholars or nationalists in Gilgit-Baltistan have claimed, that Gilgit-Baltistan is 'the last colony' of Pakistan in the sense of economic exploitation of the area. It is perhaps with the developments of the Karakoram highway in the last decade that the exploitation of resources in Gilgit-Baltistan has become more attractive for Pakistan and other major international players, such as the Chinese.

14 Hussain Abadi, *Tārīkh-i Baltistān*.

15 For an account of the events, see Mahajan, *Debaacle in Baltistan*.

16 This is the only account I came across about abduction of women in the area, but it is probably not the only one. On the case of abducted women during Partition, see the very interesting account of Butalia, *The Other Side*, 125-171.

These critical views of the past are, however, anecdotal, and the accounts of older people – a few of whom lived through that period – tend to exaggerate the agency of local guerrillas and platoons in support of liberation. In their stories they used the term ‘Kashmiri’ (that is, the administration dominated by Sikhs and Hindu officers at the time) to define the enemy and indicate that they saw themselves as victims. They did not share good memories of Baltistan’s condition as part of the princely state. In fact, the use of the term ‘liberation’ to refer to getting rid of the maharaja’s rule indicates that the purpose of the fighting was to break away from the princely state. These accounts may be the reason the cultural manifestations of claims to transregional connections mentioned above do not include Kashmir.

In the course of my visits to Skardu over the period 2009–2013, I noticed in my interactions that locals’ views on Baltistan’s relationship with Kashmir were being redefined.¹⁷ These modifications were probably related to the building of trust and friendship between me and the interlocutors, since a few of them expressed more critical views in our later interactions than they did the first time we met. However, their opinions also had to do with ongoing developments at the time, such as the granting to Gilgit-Baltistan of a new ‘autonomy package’ under the 2009 Empowerment and Self-Governance Order, incidents of sectarian violence against the Shia along the Karakoram Highway (KKH) in 2012, the evolution of cross-LoC initiatives on Kashmir, and economic transformations associated with the widening of the KKH and the building of major infrastructures. The Kashmir question was strategically used by my interlocutors to reflect on issues of belonging and statehood regarding their territory’s relationship with Pakistan.

Instead of ‘looking for Kashmir’ in Baltistan, I shifted my attention to understanding how eventual political developments in the Kashmir Valley could affect the mood in Baltistan. Many in Baltistan would identify first with Pakistan, although their ambivalent status as citizens of that state put them in an awkward position. Some of my interlocutors pointed out that integration into Pakistan was only a matter of time, and referred to the 2009 Order as a step towards this integration. Others, however, were displeased with Pakistan’s treatment of the area as a disputed territory. During meetings in 2013, I noticed that criticism of Pakistan was becoming more openly articulated in public, and was expressed in public speeches during cultural and sports events. Still, the matter continues to be sensitive for ordinary urban dwellers.

17 In late April and early May 2012 I interviewed Baltis in Islamabad, as I could not access the area.

In Skardu, youth and adults framed the Kashmir question in terms of deprivation, the impossibility of inducing changes in the situation, and uncertainty regarding the future. The sense of deprivation unfolded from the confusing legal status of the region within Pakistan and the overall instability of the state, the different treatment that Baltistan and Ladakh receive within the India-Pakistan dialogue process as compared with AJK and the Valley, and the knowledge that things 'on the other side' (in Kargil and in India in general) are better. In this regard, the 'Kashmir issue' is imposed on them from above, as one of my interviewees, a doctor, narrated when he referred to the Kargil episode:

Everything can happen here. We do not know who you are. A little bit before the Kargil War happened, we got to know that some outsiders [members of militant groups fighting in the Kashmir Valley, who can be Kashmiris or Pakistanis] came to Skardu. Some of them stayed in the cantonment [that is, with the protection of the army] while others lived in rented apartments in the town. People did not like it. They were outsiders, Kashmiris, probably. One day, an incident occurred when the owner of a house, an old woman, refused to keep one of these men any longer. They were not polite. He threatened her and when people got to know about it, the youth demonstrated demanding these outsiders to leave the town. Some youth were arrested and taken to the cantonment. Then, the religious leaders mediated with the military to release the detainees, while these outsiders left.¹⁸

When I asked where those outsiders had left for, he answered: 'We do not know. Probably they went to other military camps. Then, the Kargil War broke out.' This account, as well as others relating the sectarian incidents in Skardu, reiterate that conflict there is orchestrated from outside. In other words, the 'Kashmir' dispute is imposed on people from this territory by the state (and mainly by the military), not only by keeping Baltistan formally attached to the dispute but by using the territory and its people for continuing the conflict with the aim of snatching the Kashmir Valley from India.¹⁹ In this context, local inhabitants have so far reacted by embracing

¹⁸ Interview, Skardu, 25 March 2010.

¹⁹ The territory is used by the military to launch operations such as the one that led to the Kargil war, but local people are also involved in these operations through recruitment. A number of locals have been recruited into the army over decades and this makes things more complicated because families come to depend on this income. During fieldwork, I once tried to interview a few men in their fifties and sixties from border areas living in Skardu on an issue

an image of unity, and the Shia religious leaders have played an important role as mediators with the military and the leaders of other sects.

Interviewees in Skardu, with a few exceptions, saw the merger of Gilgit-Baltistan with Pakistan as normal. One of my acquaintances, with whom I met over the years, admitted in one of our conversations: 'Pakistan does not want us.' When I asked him why, he said: 'What do you think?' This happened in July 2013 and reflected the tense climate at the time. On 28 February 2012, an attack on a bus on the KKH in Kohistan killed eighteen passengers from Gilgit-Baltistan, including seven from Skardu.²⁰ The incident was considered a case of sectarian violence because passengers were previously segregated and their identities verified. Those killed belonged to the Shia faith of Islam. Rage spread among the population, and Section 144 of the Pakistan Code of Criminal Procedure of 1898 was imposed in order to prevent the spill over of sectarian violence.²¹ The situation became worse in Gilgit and lasted for several months. In Baltistan, people from Kharmang, a location close to the LoC, threatened to march toward the LoC, arguing, as someone recalled to me when narrating that incident, 'if Pakistan does not protect us, India will.' They demanded that the LoC and the road to Kargil be opened, a request also made by a few thousand families living in Skardu.²² Eventually, both the army and local leadership called a halt to the march, although the situation remained tense for a while. Religious identity came to the fore as an element uniting both sides, and was therefore mentioned to me in private. Although religious identity per se was not mobilized publicly on this occasion by the main religious leaders in Baltistan, religion was the main reason behind the march because the intended demand for protection from India was articulated on the basis that the Shia of Gilgit-Baltistan were under threat.

Sectarian violence is endemic in most parts of Pakistan, but the disputed situation of Gilgit-Baltistan creates a differentiated sense of alienation from the rest of the country. The inhabitants of the area feel powerless, based on their condition as potentially part of the Pakistani nation and their location in a landlocked territory where they are unable to develop ties across the border. Those marching toward the LoC turned to the other side for a

which was connected to historical events in 1948. They were friendly to me all the time – I used to meet them while walking in the city and they always greeted me – but they refused to be interviewed. When I explained this to a trusted friend, he said that probably this was because their sons were enrolled in the army. I had previously interviewed a few men whom I knew had sons in the army, but they never mentioned, nor did I ask, more about this aspect.

20 Uzairakhan, 'Passengers hauled off buses'.

21 Mir, 'Sectarian violence'.

22 *Pamir Times*, 'Kharmang: people march'.

solution, even though there was a risk that this action could be interpreted as 'anti-national' by the Pakistani authorities. What could be seen as a logical demand – to open a land route that would be beneficial for those living in the area – has become a highly political and contentious issue. The mention of 'opening the road' by a resident can be interpreted as a sign of disloyalty by the authorities. In this sense, the border area seems to be a place where a regime of silence reigns, and where locals do not have any agency.

Those living in Skardu have views on the Kashmir dispute that digress from the way the latter is represented (as an affair between India and Pakistan and as a nationalist project). For them, the main problem is the border, that is, how this construct impacts their lives. Borderlanders are aware of their limited ability to change things. Understanding the conflict from places such as Skardu and Kargil demonstrates how conflicts are framed elsewhere, in distant centres of power, and imposed on a place. The securitization in Baltistan, insofar as it is 'part of the Kashmir dispute', deprives those living there of a normal context for politics. Securitization, as Ole Wæver points out, has to specify the securitizing actor that is claiming an existential threat, which in this case is the state.²³ As a security provider the state creates insecurity for the people it attempts to protect, because securitization implies a form of militarization.²⁴ This can be seen in the powerful role of the military and the Pakistani intelligence agencies in suppressing dissent and discouraging democratic processes in these territories.

In this context, manifestations of conflict are found in the private sphere rather than in the open urban landscape. These manifestations especially concern forced separation and victimhood. This is the case for thousands of inhabitants who have been separated from their relatives across the LoC and those who could not choose sides during the course of events in 1947-1949. In Skardu there is also a population displaced from villages near the LoC who fled their homes because of the constant skirmishes and eventual fighting. Families whose villages were seized by the Indian army during the 1971 war also live in the city. Unlike those displaced in AJK, who

23 Wæver, 'Politics, Security', 469. See also, 'Securitization and desecuritization', 46-86. This scholar initially maintained in an article published in 1995 that security had 'to be read through the lens of *national* security', (p. 49) but has later elaborated on the fact that other actors and sectors can be the object of securitization.

24 Here, I understand militarization in the broad sense of the concept provided by Cynthia Enloe: 'To become militarised is to adopt militaristic values (e.g., a belief in hierarchy, obedience, and the use of force) and priorities as one's own, to see military solutions as particularly effective, to see the world as a dangerous place best approached with militaristic attitudes'. *Globalization and Militarism*, 18.

have received compensation, these groups always note that they have had to fend for themselves to make a living.²⁵ They live in the less fertile areas of the city, some building their basic mudbrick houses in the desert.

Victims of border fighting are seen by other urban residents as the product of casual fatalities, but they do not link it to the conflict. The manager of the Marafie Foundation (a Kuwaiti-funded NGO working in Baltistan) objected, during my interview with him, to my expression of surprise at the existence of a significant number of orphaned children in Baltistan. He saw it as normal. In fact, Skardu hosts several institutions run as NGOs with support from the Gulf countries to aid people in need, such as orphans, widows, and other socially vulnerable people.²⁶ During my visit to one of these compounds, Madina Colony, I found a number of widows and orphans whose husbands and fathers had been killed by crossfire while working as porters for the army. These centres (the one I visited hosted around 800 people) provided them with training, education, and support for remarriage in the case of widows. Apparently, these residents do not count as victims because they are not part of a specific group, nor are they recognized in public as such. Therefore, rather than manifestations in the public urban space, the scars of the 'Kashmir issue' have to be found in private spaces in Skardu.

The borders of the conflict

Owing to Gilgit-Baltistan's constitutional limbo and its ties to the Kashmir dispute, people in Skardu are wary about their future because there is great potential for the current political situation to change. This context of uncertainty is also shared with other places such as Srinagar, Muzaffarabad, and Kargil. This uncertainty does not generally manifest in the possibility of another war between India and Pakistan, which many perceive as improbable, but in the question of 'taking sides' if an opportunity arises to take a political decision. A change in the political setting of the Kashmir Valley may also affect the context in Baltistan. Although the conflict in Baltistan and Ladakh is different from that of AJK and the Kashmir Valley, interventions in one location might impact other places as a sort of regional game of chess. Pakistan's continuation of the policy of linking the future of Baltistan (and Gilgit-Baltistan in general) to that of the Kashmir dispute has caused these areas to seek alternative forms of representation.

25 This situation is different from those displaced in AJK, who have received economic support, mainly because the AJK Government deals with their situation.

26 Interview in Skardu, 28 June 2018. Mato Bouzas, 'Karakoram mountains'.

In this scenario, cultural manifestations emphasizing Baltistan's ties with other regions, such as those mentioned earlier, cannot be treated as simple geopolitical discourses. These images, activities, and interventions contain a degree of materiality and intention (by those involved) which can be observed in both objects and relationships. They can be seen as an articulation of forms of resistance. The movement for the revival of the Tibetan heritage of Baltistan, which according to those promoting the initiative began in the late 1990s, includes the preservation of Buddhist sites, the revival of indigenous arts such as old patterns of lattice work, and a renewed interest in the Balti language (in both Tibetan and Arab-Persian alphabets).²⁷ Behind this initiative there are several local actors, both individuals and NGOs, who intend to promote a certain image of Baltistan, and who undoubtedly ask themselves 'who we are' and 'to which place do we belong'. In doing so, they locate Baltistan as connected with the less politically controversial Tibetan influences rather than the more problematic ones of Kashmir and Pakistan. Practical motives also apply, such as the need to revive the flagging tourism industry. By claiming ties with Tibet, these actors and groups are attempting to highlight the peaceful character of Baltistan (through the indirect associations of Tibet, Buddhism, and peace), which is contrasted to the conflict-prone nature of Kashmir and the insecurity in Pakistan. The resultant spatial figuration of Baltistan as part of a Tibetan cultural milieu challenges the existing borders and counters the dominant narrative of Baltistan's ambivalent position between Pakistan and Kashmir. Not surprisingly, it has echoes on the other side of the LoC, in Kargil. The need to expand borders in the urban landscape of Skardu is a response to a space that is shrinking, and it represents a language, a discourse, of those who cannot openly express their political views.

Kargil and the borders of the nation

The town

Kargil is the largest urban settlement near the LoC in the state of Jammu and Kashmir in India, located some 10 kilometres away from the LoC. It has 16,338 inhabitants, according to the 2011 census of India. Part of the less populated Ladakh Administrative Division, Kargil district is divided into two sub-districts: Kargil, where the town is located, and Zangskar. Kargil

27 Mato Bouzas, 'Territorialisation'.

Image 4.2 Kargil, June 2011

Photograph by Antía Mato Bouzas

is a Shia-majority area in the predominantly Buddhist Ladakh, a religious marker which is often mentioned to illustrate the cultural and religious diversity of 'Kashmir', highlight the increasing religious schism within the state of Jammu and Kashmir, and underline its religious connections with Baltistan. Above all of these interpretations, however, Kargil is a crossroads of influences.²⁸ This can be seen in its condition as an essential passing-by nodal point that connects Skardu (at present, in 2018, closed), Srinagar, and Leh. The numerous Indian (and some foreign) tourists who travel along the Srinagar-Leh road, or alternatively want to visit Zangskar, must pass through Kargil. This position as an intersection defines Kargil's part in the Kashmir issue: it does not fully side with any regional demands. Kargil's position can only be described in relation to other parts: the Kashmir Valley, Ladakh, and Baltistan.

As in the other cities, the presence of large army camps in Kargil has resulted in continuous interactions between the civilian population and the military.²⁹ The relations between them can sometimes be tense – on issues of land-grabbing by the military, as happens in Skardu – but is also beneficial

²⁸ Aggarwal, *Beyond Lines*, 35.

²⁹ Bhan, *Counterinsurgency*, 171-176.

for locals – people are occasionally transported in military planes to other places in India for medical treatment and for other reasons. Unlike in Skardu, where locals objected to my labelling it a ‘border city’ because they were not within range of cross-border fire, Kargil’s condition as a border town is openly accepted. Locals express fear about the possibility of a confrontation between the two armies because in that case they would be targeted. The military presence puts the civilian area of the town in danger, as was also noted in Skardu, but at the same time people see the presence of the army as a sign of protection, that India is taking care of them.

Because it is a relatively remote town, owing to its distance from the main centres of Leh and Srinagar and the isolation it experiences in the winter season, the urban landscape of Kargil is probably the one that most evokes the sense of a lost world. There, it is possible to have a sense of the immediate severing of interaction caused by the closure of the border in the mid-twentieth century. A few Sikh families still live in the town and maintain their temple. In the main market, at the time of my fieldwork in 2012, there was still one shop run by a local Hindu and others by the descendants of former Yarkandi traders (a term that generally refers to those from the former oases in today’s Xinjiang). This social diversity is mainly testimonial, in the sense that there is no engagement with this pluralism at the level of society, although it has been duly included in the representations of cultural activists and entrepreneurs promoting Kargil for tourism purposes.³⁰ However, this social diversity shows the dynamic character of the town and challenges the position of Kargil as an end point, the limit of India’s sovereignty – as expressed in the popular motto, ‘from Kanyakumari to Kargil, India is one’.³¹

The conflict

Kargil is the main urban site of military confrontation between India and Pakistan. Confrontation is often referred to by urban dwellers as a tactical issue, with elders indicating with their fingers the mountain peaks controlled by India or Pakistan in one or another period. Violence manifests in a crude battle for territory which becomes more aggressive as it moves further east, in the direction of the Siachen. Kargil became internationally known in the spring and summer of 1999 during an episode of war between India and

30 Owing to philanthropic, but also economic and political, aims.

31 Aggarwal, *Beyond Lines*, see illustration on page 3. On the representations of the slogan as part of the national imaginary, see Sarmal, ‘Kargil to Kanyakumari’.

Pakistan. The fighting drew international concern because it occurred one year after the two countries had defied the existing international nuclear consensus by testing several devices. Fighting developed along the LoC, both west (toward the largest village of Dras) and east (toward Batalik) of Kargil. The town was severely affected, and the population felt insecure and was evacuated because of its proximity to the fighting.³² They were caught in the crossfire.

While narrating the tragic incident at the start of the Kargil War in which a bomb fell on the main Kargil bazaar, killing 23 people, my interlocutor, a retired schoolteacher, could not avoid excusing the Pakistani army to some extent, conceding: 'We know that they [the Pakistani soldiers] are also Muslims, some might even have relatives here. What can they do? It is not easy for them also.'³³ Similar views have been expressed by others, underlining the shared ties across the LoC but also the religious character of the Pakistani army and the fact that they are targeting Muslims. Indeed, the latter aspect creates an ambivalence that seems to be absent among those with whom I spoke in Baltistan, for whom the 'Indian army' is seen as Hindu – thereby constituting an element of difference and separation. The fact that the 'enemy' is of the same religion is perceived in Kargil as an unfortunate situation and a complex reality with which they live. Because of this, they are seen as suspicious in the eyes of the state despite the fact that the fighting is between the armies and is not directed at them.

Conflict in Kargil is about the border and the consequences of a potential military confrontation between the two armies. However, as part of the Kashmir dispute, there has been much speculation over what Kargilis think about the conflict in the Valley. Since bringing up this topic is potentially problematic in Kargil, I avoided addressing it directly in interviews. I mention this because whereas the works of scholars focusing on developments in Zangskar and Ladakh show how in Buddhist-majority areas there is a distance from the conflict in the Kashmir Valley, the case is more problematic in Kargil. Academics and businessmen I interviewed during fieldwork in Srinagar said that people in Kargil 'are turning toward' the Valley because of the discrimination they face from Leh in terms of resources and also because of their different religious identity. Three local politicians I met in Kargil, however, demonstrated their distance from the Valley by underscoring that locals had never been involved in violence. This is because, on the one hand,

32 For experiences along this tract, see Bhagat, 'Reclaiming lives'.

33 Interview in Kargil, 6 June 2011.

they need to negotiate a share of the resources of the state government, and on the other hand, they are aware of the area's importance for India's security because India will not voluntarily give up Kargil, and Buddhist political leadership in Leh has been struggling for Ladakh – to which Kargil belongs – to be ruled directly from Delhi.

In the Kargil main bazaar, placards marking the offices of the NC and the PDP,³⁴ the main Kashmiri parties from the Valley, indicate that they have some local support. In the latest state elections of 2014, however, the local seat in the Jammu and Kashmir legislative assembly was won by the popular politician Asgar Ali Karbalai, at the time competing for the INC. While there certainly is an orientation towards the Kashmir Valley, it is unclear whether this has to do with the gradual identity formation and economic schism occurring in Ladakh, economic deprivation, or simply that, as the capital of the state, Srinagar offers a number of job and educational opportunities for Kargilis that cannot be found in Leh.³⁵

As in the case of Skardu, conflict in Kargil does not have an explicit 'Kashmir' focus in terms of a relationship with the political demands of the Valley and the violence there. Unlike the case of Gilgit-Baltistan's status as part of Pakistan, the Indian state sees Kargil as an indisputable part of India. This contrasts with perceptions from the other side of the border. Some interlocutors from Kargil pointed out to me, regarding the case of a village near this town and now on the Indian side that was part of Pakistan until 1971, that 'no Pakistani official had ever visited the village since Partition'. Whether this is true or not, the idea conveyed by my interlocutors was that the presence of the state is more strongly felt in Kargil than in Skardu. In Kargil, the term 'Kashmir' is connected to the border dispute and the desire of Pakistan to take control of the area, but it also has an eye on the Kashmir Valley. Unlike in Skardu (and in Gilgit-Baltistan in general), where criticism of the Kashmir dispute has been articulated publicly, in Kargil this is absent.³⁶

34 The NC is a historical party and has broader support in the state. It has been the hegemonic party in Kashmir in the same manner as the Indian National Congress in India. The People's Democratic Party was only formed in 1998 and draws support mainly from the Kashmir Valley.

35 Aggarwal, *Beyond Lines*, 42-43; Bhan, *Counterinsurgency*, 15. During my fieldwork I observed that there were a number of students from Kargil in the public and private universities in the Valley, but there were hardly any Buddhist students from other parts of Ladakh. At the same time, Srinagar offers working opportunities for Kargilis. Owing to the extreme weather conditions in winter in the area, a number of locals also increasingly spend the winter in the capital of the Valley, mainly those who cannot afford to travel to the Indian plains of Jammu or elsewhere.

36 Apart from groups in Gilgit-Baltistan, former Chief Minister Mehdi Shah has openly distanced Gilgit-Baltistan from the Kashmir issue.

The borders of the dispute

People in Kargil are conscious that the image of India is a powerful one. As the politician Mr. Karbalai pointed out: 'We are happy in India, we do not want to be part of Pakistan. We know they have issues there [Baltis in Pakistan; he points his finger towards his back].' He acknowledges, however, that sometimes people's loyalty is questioned. The issue of divided families, of which he estimates there are some 3000 on the Indian side, raises suspicions, particularly regarding the demand of opening the Skardu-Kargil road (which he supports). He also blames Pakistan for opposing the measure. Interviews in Kargil also showed that sympathies for India are framed in terms of economic advantages and more freedom than is available in Pakistan. People do receive information about the other side through various channels – migration from both sides to the Gulf and pre-arranged meetings in third countries such as Kuwait, Iran, and Iraq during pilgrimages, telephone calls from the Pakistani side, internet, exchange of videos, simple observations of life in the nearby border villages, and information provided by the army – and they see themselves as being in a better position than those in Pakistan. At the same time, since the Kargil War the whole region has been experiencing a boom in Indian tourism. Kargil is close to the location of the battle scenario of 1999, as seen in a memorial built near Dras and other sites that attract mainly Indian visitors. Indeed, it is this narrative of Indianness, the Indian soldiers who gave their lives in this territory, which emotively connects this remote area with the heart of the nation.

Despite the fact that places such as Kargil are formally incorporated as part of the state and there has not been a militarization of civilian areas as in Srinagar, life there is determined by the security constraints derived from proximity to the LoC. This means the army interferes in many aspects of the civilian space because of its own needs as an institution and as a group, as well as to monitor the population and socialize it to a certain idea of the state. Significantly, in places such as Kargil (and the border areas across the LoC in Baltistan) the military becomes what Mona Bhan terms 'armed humanitarians' – that is, the reinvention of the military as 'a partner rather than a threat to the region's social and economic development.'³⁷ In this context, borderlanders are trapped between their 'loyalty' to the Indian state and their sentiments of sharing close ties across the border.

37 Bhan, *Counterinsurgency*, 188-189.

Conclusion

Manifestations of the 'Kashmir dispute' in Srinagar, Muzaffarabad, Skardu, and Kargil underscore the interwoven dynamics of the conflict. These urban border areas cannot be understood simply as static places near a border; they are always 'on the move', criss-crossed by various phenomena connected with the dispute that impacts them in various ways, ongoing state-making processes in these peripheries, and interventions that can be contextualized as part of globalization processes. Conflict has created a context in which developments in one location along the LoC invariably affect events in others. This follows two opposing trends: how the dispute is described and dealt with by the respective states and imposed on the place, and the modes in which groups in the affected areas challenge dominant views, which constitutes forms of resistance. The conflict's interwoven dynamics constitute a figuration, in the sense of the figurational sociology developed by Norbert Elias, in which, on the one hand, these urban areas are bound together by the dynamics of conflict, but on the other, by seeking alternative ties to other places 'outside' the stated figuration (through cross-LoC economic relations and symbolic representations), they attempt to challenge that very representation of the dispute.

First, the Kashmir urban border areas are militarized spaces where the military, though physically separated in camps, interferes in civilian life at many levels (surveillance, economic dependence, drawing soldiers from the local societies, etc.). This militarization has been more intense in the Kashmir Valley, and in Srinagar, where paramilitary forces are stationed in civilian areas to monitor the activities of civilians and enter into the intimate sphere. The military presence, and the militarization of Srinagar in particular, does not impede mobility, and these urban areas are being economically transformed through various investment programmes and their promotion as tourism sites (which in the case of Muzaffarabad is mainly aimed at Pakistani tourists, since foreigners are not welcome). But militarization creates a specific context, a consciousness in which further dissection of the urban space is carried out. This can be seen in the existence of a variety of enclosed spaces in these towns and cities – 'refugee' camps in Muzaffarabad, training camps, orphanages in Skardu, gated communities, limited access to specific sites, and so on.

Second, the border towns are culturally heterogeneous spaces, despite the conflict's reinforcement of social borders between various groups and the mobilization of identity during Partition, which by distinguishing between Muslims and others has accentuated the religious divide of these places,

particularly in Skardu and Muzaffarabad. However, conflict has not affected the other dimension of the border city as a place of refuge, a safe place for those who have fled other conflicts, as the case of Srinagar illustrates, and for those displaced out of fear and by cross-border fighting. Conflict permeates all spheres of urban life but does not affect all urban dwellers equally. The city's diversity distinguishes between those who have a direct interest in the conflict (as victims, for political and economic reasons, etc.) and those who do not, as is the case for some groups in Muzaffarabad. From this perspective, place, framed in terms of relations with other locations, becomes an important element in the understanding of the Kashmir dispute. It is place (as part of a territory), and not religion, that is the source of the violence. Violence is exercised in places and is part of a struggle of place-making. The latter can be seen in the 'normalization' in Srinagar, which operates as an indicator that the state of Jammu and Kashmir is a 'normal' state of the Indian Republic; in the shaping of Muzaffarabad as a political link with Kashmir while also being accommodated into Pakistan ('Kashmir vs. Pakistan' in Muzaffarabad); in the cultural marketing of Baltistan as having links to Tibet (instead of to Kashmir and Pakistan) in Skardu; and in the emphasis on the crossroads character of Kargil as a response to Indianness or Kashmiriness.

Third, an element of uncertainty permeates life in all of these locations because of the realistic possibility that the current status may be altered by transformations in the territorial and constitutional status of some of these areas or due to an unexpected violent development. Although expressions of uncertainty vary from place to place and cannot be considered interconnected, they can certainly have a spill over effect, in the sense that events occurring in one place can mobilize people in other locations. An overarching expression of this uncertainty that was shared in all the four locations in which research was carried out is that the current situation is not definitive and 'a decision has to happen'. Meanwhile, or precisely because of it, interventions are already happening.

5 The Line... the People

Abstract

The opening of the LoC to connect Srinagar and Muzaffarabad (and other points between the Kashmir Valley/Northern Jammu and AJK) in 2005 was intended to facilitate the visits of divided families and boost cross-border economic ties through trade. This and other confidence-building measures aim to transform the conflict character of the region without addressing the question of social justice. Groups on both sides who do not recognize the LoC as a border maintain that its opening to exchanges, an apparent deterritorialization process, is in fact contributing to its institutionalization as a border. The border filters mobility through bureaucratic regulations that limit who can cross it and, in the process, it also becomes institutionalized (fixed) as a border. In the border areas of Ladakh and Baltistan, however, the LoC remains closed.

Keywords: Dialogue process, confidence-building measure (CBM), neoliberal peace, status quo, divided families, cross-LoC trade

In this chapter I discuss border space transformations near the LoC. I argue that the ambivalent legal nature of the LoC as a border, rather than preserving the status quo, is an essential part of this transformative activity. The limited opening of the LoC in 2005 for separated families and the exchange of goods was framed as part of a broader understanding by the governments of India and Pakistan that viewing borders as barriers is no longer sustainable because of the pressure of globalization. However, this mobility is still 'filtered' through bureaucratic procedures and new technologies of surveillance and control. I maintain that the opening of crossing points is itself a bordering process, by which the two states attempt to gain control over the edges of their polity where state sovereignty is uncertain. These edges are currently held through exceptional legal means and authoritarian politics, but the aim is to incorporate them into the rest of the state's territory through economic and infrastructural interventions. Unable to negotiate the

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political dissent that arises in such disputed territories, the state attempts to 'normalize' life there by making them, materially and symbolically, into 'normal' state spaces.

The opening of the LoC

On 7 April 2005, the inauguration – amid great security – of a fortnightly bus service linking Srinagar and Muzaffarabad symbolized the first 'formal' opening of the LoC since 1949.¹ This initiative was based on the premise that increasing interaction between the divided territories would improve people's life conditions and reduce support for violence.² Such confidence-building measures (CBMs) became a relatively popular instrument for conflict management and peace-building processes in the 1990s, and have played an important role in nuclear diplomacy in South Asia. They are an instrument of what Ronnie D. Lipschutz and Susanne Jonas have termed 'neoliberal peace': a process designed 'to put in place the institutional forms of a peaceful society without bothering about the question of social justice.'³ In the case of Kashmir, this can be explained by the fact that regulated mobility and the facilitation of economic exchange would favour the creation of a climate of confidence and contribute towards changing the conflict.

CBMs are framed by a persistent understanding of international security based on the realist paradigm: the disposition of states (or parties) toward war and the need to have a minimum agreement in place to end the pattern of damage and destruction. In Kashmir, CBMs aim to create favourable conditions for the solution of the conflict in the future by managing interventions in the present. However, this logic implies extending the state of exception until India and Pakistan can properly incorporate the territories as 'normal' state spaces. CBM initiatives are neither politically neutral nor implemented in a vacuum, because they shift the debate from the sovereign character of Kashmir (the political settlement of all disputed territories) to the sovereign control (incorporation) of territories that are already administered by the respective states. Rather than putting the question of sovereignty of the disputed areas on hold, CBMs recognize a

1 Until the mid-1950s, however, mobility across the then ceasefire line was relatively flexible for residents on both sides. Bose, *Contested Lands*, 156.

2 Khare, 'Bus to Muzaffarabad'.

3 Jonas and Lipschutz, 'Beyond the Neoliberal', 2; Lipschutz, 'Neoliberal peace', 7-10.

particular state of affairs. In the case of Kashmir, this is not that different from what John Agnew describes as the sovereign game for which sovereignty is 'the result of a system of interdependence between states in which it is the recognition (with a nod and a wink) by other states of each state's sovereignty that keeps the entire system afloat.'⁴ In other words, it is the recreation and continuation of the state system. In this context, the opening of borders implies the normalization of state space in territories whose state sovereignty is uncertain. Therefore, the opening of the LoC, with its attached rules and regulations allowing the movement of people and goods, represents a territorialization process that aims to control the murky edges of the state in a context of 'political normality', rather a deterritorialization in which geographic territory loses its importance.

The India-Pakistan dialogue process was conceived with specific ideas about the regional space. First of all, the opening of the LoC is part of a larger context resulting from lobbying activities by groups in both countries, part of what is known as Track Two diplomacy, and is mainly based on the views of foreign policy bureaucrats, analysts, and advisors in India who have taken a new approach to Pakistan.⁵ In their view, conflict in the region cannot last forever and constitutes a burden on India's foreign policy. This coincides with the proposal by the former Pakistani president Pervez Musharraf of 'making borders irrelevant'.⁶ Second, making the border a non-issue – 'irrelevant' – shifts the debate on the disputed character of these territories (which is related to the question of social justice) to an issue of political normalization (related to questions of governmentality and governance). Third, if the LoC is no longer relevant, this means that the border will move somewhere else; that differentiation can be expressed in other non-territorial terms such as in the constant exercise of surveillance and control over people and by interventions in the border territories with the aim of transforming their conflict character. Relatedly, the LoC (as the border) becomes the channel by which the border space, the murky edges, is incorporated through economic processes into the realm of the state. Filtering (who and what can cross the border) and spatial fragmentation (into different legal regimes) become necessary means to sustain the process.

4 Agnew, *Globalization*, 77-78.

5 Sewak, *Multi-Track Diplomacy*; Bajpai, 'India's strategic culture'; Askari-Rizvi, 'Pakistan's strategic culture'.

6 Reddy, 'Make boundaries irrelevant'.

Thus, the initial 'de-freezing' of the LoC by promoting the movement of people and goods is aimed at creating a base in society that supports the dialogue process. Society in general in AJK and the Kashmir Valley did not oppose these initiatives, but this cannot necessarily be interpreted as backing of the dialogue process. The reason for this is that the LoC per se is not the main bone of contention for those demanding a political solution for the fate of their territories.⁷ It does not play a central role for those who are seeking justice (relatives of disappeared, prisoners, etc.), or for those who are demanding political freedom and the end of militarization. The question of opening the LoC shifts attention from the political issue to the question of the incorporation of the disputed territories into the respective states – a change that denies the right of dissent to those groups who are at odds with the state. This reading of the question can be illustrated with the cases I studied at local level: the movement of people and the movement of goods.

A Mobility of People

Until 2017, mobility across the LoC via the bus services – buses were exchanged at the border – was quite a restricted affair. Travel was only allowed for divided families who were able to prove cross-border relationships, and this did not apply to those working in government positions or people who had been displaced from the Kashmir Valley after 1990.⁸ Those wishing to travel on the buses first needed to go through a lengthy application procedure to obtain clearance from the authorities. The initial waiting period was two years, but this significantly shortened to a few months around September 2008, when the fortnightly service started to operate on a weekly basis to accommodate the demand. However, interruptions occurred from time to time owing to unexpected catastrophes (the 2005 earthquake and the 2014 floods), periods of political tension between India and Pakistan (e.g., after the Mumbai attacks in November 2008) and mass unrest in the Valley (e.g., in the summer of 2016). Personal impressions gathered through testimonies during my visit in November 2014 indicate that the initiative had not made any significant inroads beyond improving the possibility of separated families to meet. In general, those I spoke to in Srinagar and Muzaffarabad saw the measure as only concerning a specific group, unrelated to the larger political problem.

7 I refer to the fact that the main issue is not the LoC itself, but rather the political problem. The LoC is certainly a big problem for those living in nearby villages and for separated families.

8 Conditions may have changed since then.

According to data from the Indian Ministry of Home Affairs, between 2005 and 31 December 2017 some 34,361 passengers had travelled across the LoC, mostly from the Kashmir Valley to AJK.⁹ This seems like a small figure considering that the number of divided families in these territories may amount to several hundred thousand. In addition, there are some 30,000 displaced people in AJK, mostly Paharis, who crossed the LoC after 1990 but cannot return to their former homes because the Indian Government suspects them to have been involved in militancy.¹⁰ A noticeable group of militants who have given up fighting and are now stranded in AJK and Pakistan are also barred from travelling on the buses. This latter group returns to the Kashmir Valley mostly via Nepal. They take a flight to the Himalayan capital, and once there they enter India by road. Sometimes they are detained by the police to check their identities, after which they are released.¹¹ This seems to indicate that there is a tacit agreement between the Indian and Pakistani authorities after the passing of a resolution supporting the return of former militants by the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly in 2010. The way the former militants are returning to their homes also illustrates how India and Pakistan are carefully managing the symbolic aspect of the conflict to address the legal problem these men pose as combatants. They are barred from travelling back across the LoC or via a direct flight from Pakistan to India, a fact which amounts to a non-recognition of their lives' trajectories, in particular, their first crossing of the LoC from the Valley into AJK to receive arms training.

The tight control exercised over potential bus passengers and the truck services is based on security concerns. Militant groups who oppose the dialogue process tried to sabotage the bus on its very first day in Srinagar in 2005, because they perceived the initiative to be undermining the main cause of the conflict. Concern over security can also be seen in how travel is handled at the departure and arrival points in Srinagar and Muzaffarabad. Upon recommendations from friends and interviewees, I opted not to visit the arrival/departure place in Srinagar, which is located in a government

9 Ministry of Home Affairs, *Annual Report 2017-18*, 19.

10 The figure is from the photo-book Mass Welfare Foundation, *Life in the Migrant Camps of AJK*, 7. This is a joint report published by the NGOs Interchurch Peace Council and Mass Welfare Foundation. It is also drawn from Rahman and Mahmud, 'Kashmiri Refugees', 43-67. The ban on this specific group's use of the buses was mentioned in several interviews in Muzaffarabad in September 2009.

11 I knew of this practice after meeting two former militants who had returned to the Kashmir Valley after living for more than a decade in AJK and Pakistan, and from an interview with a senior officer of the Kashmir police in Srinagar on 16 July 2012. For detailed information, see Jeelani, 'The departed'; Yasir and Dixit, 'A field study'.

area. However, I did observe the green and yellow buses arriving in and departing from the restricted government area in Muzaffarabad in September 2009 and March 2010. Unlike the typical bustling bus stations in the region, travel in the cross-LoC buses occurred almost as a secret affair in government building complexes. The scene was far from normal, although no exceptional security measures were taken except for the presence of a few armed police. Only a few passengers' relatives showed up and no other locals were present.¹² This was rather unusual owing to the often-spontaneous public curiosity in South Asian societies, and the normal courtesy whereby large families gather to meet and say goodbye to relatives.

I heard mixed reports during my informal talks with passengers on the spot in Muzaffarabad. On the first occasion, in September 2009, people from the Valley had arrived in AJK; on the second, in March 2010, those from the Valley were returning after a stay in AJK. Some of the passengers, who were elderly, had themselves suffered separation, while in a significant number of cases the visitors were descendants of divided families. All of them expressed happiness to see their relatives across the LoC, but when I asked about their impressions about how they saw the Kashmir Valley compared with AJK and vice versa, I noticed that criticism extended to both sides. Militarization in the Kashmir Valley and the lack of freedom in AJK were mentioned, while everyone recognized that the Valley was economically more developed than AJK.

With a few exceptions, most of the passengers I talked with on the spot, at a distance from the police presence, were middle-aged men. What struck me was that they seemed to be fairly open in expressing their views. I had a longer conversation with a man from Sopore, probably in his mid-sixties, who had just arrived. His son-in-law had come to pick him up. He had travelled to AJK on four previous occasions, but this was the first time on the cross-LoC bus. Earlier, he had married his daughter to an AJK resident from Muzaffarabad (a relative of Kashmiri origin). The purpose of the visit was to see his daughter and her family, who were residing in Lahore, having moved there from AJK because of economic opportunities. He said that despite the better economic situation in the Valley (he owned a shop), life conditions were very hard because of the presence of military forces who committed 'atrocities' against people. For this reason, he was of the view that Kashmir should be part of Pakistan.

12 I have been told that many passengers use the bus services to reach the very last stop on the border on each side, because their destinations may be nearby or they do not necessarily need to proceed to Muzaffarabad or Srinagar.

Although opportunities for divided families to meet via air travel or by land routes across the Lahore border have been restricted in the past, there have been cases of cross-border marriages, normally involving women from the Valley who move to their husbands' places in AJK and Pakistan. Numbers are not known, but it seems this phenomenon has increased after the establishment of the cross-LoC bus services. The existence of this transport has facilitated the re-enactment of ties among those separated by creating a sort of normality in their lives. An interviewee from Uri who was living in Srinagar and employed in the administration pointed out that he had travelled to Muzaffarabad in 2007 and arranged his daughter's marriage there. Before moving to Srinagar, he had travelled to AJK simply by crossing the border because people from the border area 'had arrangements'. However, he admitted that this possibility later became very risky, so he had gone via Lahore to AJK for his daughter's wedding. At the time of our meeting, the daughter was about to return on the bus to deliver her child in her family home. Marriages show the renewal of ties across the border which had been interrupted by decades of forced separation.

Despite these family stories of re-encounter, the impact of the cross-LoC buses on transforming the conflict context is marginal, particularly in the Kashmir Valley. Other issues of social justice are more pressing there and have been largely ignored. In other words, the division created by the LoC is one aspect of the conflict, but there is also the question of the victims, including those who have been tortured, have disappeared, or are imprisoned in Indian jails. Little is known about violence and repression in AJK because the 'known conflict' has taken place mostly in the Kashmir Valley. The bus services ameliorate the situation of those who have been separated, but the modality under which they operate has little potential to influence the political context. Moreover, the nationalist platform of the Hurriyat, though not opposing this mobility on humanitarian grounds, considers the initiative to 'ha[ve] nothing to do with the political issue', as Yasin Malik pointed out.¹³ Objections to cross-LoC mobility were mentioned in Muzaffarabad on the grounds that this 'legal' movement legitimized the LoC as a border and diluted the political problem.

In addition, mobility across the LoC is denied to those who moved across since the insurgency began in the 1990s and the surrendered militants stranded in AJK and Pakistan, as mentioned above. The non-recognition

13 Interview, Srinagar, 12 May 2010. Nationalist leaders met the Indian governments of Atal Behari Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh to address the question of political prisoners and the situation of the Kashmir Valley, but talks were not successful.

of these two groups relates to the political problem they represent for both states: the role of Pakistan in supporting and manipulating insurgent groups, and India's interest in not addressing the existence of a force at odds with the state. Interestingly, both states agreed not to make these two groups visible in the cross-LoC mobility because they are a reminder of the existence of a deep disagreement. The filtering character of the LoC is representative of a new moment, across which divided families and goods can meet or be exchanged, but where dubious state subjects such as militants should return to their homes without leaving a trace, as if nothing had happened in the last two and a half decades. Unlike neighbouring non-disputed border contexts (such as the Nepal-Tibetan border) where there is an increasing recognition of borderlands as distinct areas in legal terms, in the vicinity of the LoC there is a sanctioning of a discriminated mobility proper of normal state borders, on the basis of what normal state borders may or may not allow.¹⁴

B Mobility of goods: The case of cross-LoC trade

From October 2008, trade among the divided parts of the Kashmir Valley and AJK was allowed within a restricted context. Two border posts were opened at Chakothi-Salamabad (linking the Kashmir Valley and Muzaffarabad areas) and Tratinote-Chakan Da Bagh (connecting Poonch and Rawalakot in central AJK). The respective Chambers of Commerce in Muzaffarabad and Srinagar became involved in the process as intermediaries with political negotiators, but only some of their members participated in the trade. This exchange occurred in a similar manner to the movement of people: trucks from each side were only allowed up to the border, where the commodities were offloaded and reloaded into trucks from the opposite side to continue the journey. Neither buses nor trucks have yet crossed the LoC (as of June 2017). As a foreigner, I could not access these restricted areas, but I gained an insight into the cross-LoC trade, mostly about the Chakothi-Salamabad route, from interviews with traders conducted in Srinagar and Muzaffarabad and newspapers and NGO reports dealing with the subject.

The characteristics of the cross-LoC trade are not the same as the general India-Pakistan commercial exchange, but they share similarities in the sense that the trading partners have some family relationship or knowledge of each other.¹⁵ In both cases the exchange is limited to twenty-one products,

¹⁴ Schneiderman, 'Himalayan border citizens'.

¹⁵ Taneja, 'India-Pakistan Trade'.

but the cross-LoC trade is a barter trade – that is, a trade in kind – and is excluded from the general taxation that applies to India-Pakistan trade.¹⁶

It was in 2010 that I first interviewed Mr. Dar, the President of the Jammu and Kashmir Chamber of Commerce, at the Chamber's office in Srinagar; this association includes traders, exporters, and houseboat owners, and has a total of 800 members.¹⁷ The Chamber was first constituted in 1924, and during our meeting Mr. Dar proudly showed me a picture of the first members hanging on the wall. He pointed out a couple of them, explaining they were businessmen from places now located in AJK, and also referred to the fact that before 1947 there was a branch of the Jammu and Kashmir Bank in Muzaffarabad. This underscored the past regional connections when both areas were part of the same political entity, as opposed to the current situation characterized by a lack of communication facilities between AJK and the Valley. The Chamber of Commerce, Mr. Dar pointed out, played the role of facilitator in the cross-LoC exchange by forwarding suggestions to the Indian Government, but it was not involved as a party in the process. In his view, the cross-LoC trade was a 'symbolic activity' meant 'to alleviate suffering' and a 'proof of good will', but had nothing to do with the 'Kashmir issue'.

In 2008-2015, the cross-LoC trade was worth some US\$ 400 million total (including exports and imports in both directions under the barter system), whereas the volume of trade between India-Pakistan in 2011 alone was over US\$ 1900 million.¹⁸ The cross-LoC traders I met in Srinagar described the activity as a positive experience, despite the many hurdles. These included the absence of currency and bank services, the lack of telephone facilities in Indian Kashmir that allowed calling the Pakistani side, and the lack of border infrastructures to store and preserve goods. These issues, they said, were preventing the development of this exchange. Traders involved saw themselves as carrying out an activity that was not really about making profit but was instead aimed at the betterment of the general social and political climate. They underlined this by referring to the fact that exchanges were not in cash but in kind, and for this 'trust' was needed. Although they also labelled their activity as 'symbolic' and were wary about

16 Interestingly, the lack of taxation has led to a trade diversion, according to my interviewees. Sikh traders from Punjab are using the Poonch-Rawalakot route through local middlemen who possess state subjecthood.

17 Interview, Srinagar, 11 May 2010.

18 Rough estimates of Cross-LoC trade are based on Sengupta, Mahmud, and Choudhary, 'Cross-line of control'; Naseem, 'Cross-Border barter trade'; in India the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. *Trade Statistics*, <http://commerce.nic.in/eidb/iecnt.asp>.

acknowledging its profitable character, economic differences and the lower prices of some commodities in AJK and Pakistan were advantageous for them. This notwithstanding, the practical regulations of this trade and the perceptions that the traders (at least those I interviewed) have about it differ slightly from the more positive considerations provided by the reports of some NGOs, pro-government bureaucrats, and those involved in two-track diplomacy between India and Pakistan.¹⁹

The often-mentioned 'symbolic' character of trade refers to its regulatory aspects, the norms and specific activities carried out by the traders themselves, as well as its altruistic or non-economic value. These aspects are strongly connected with the ambivalence about the spatial dimension of the LoC. Mr. Dar considered the cross-LoC trade to be intra-Kashmir or 'domestic trade' and unrelated to the resolution of the 'Kashmir issue', in the sense that those participating in these activities had no particular political agenda except doing 'business'. But then, if their activity was seen as mainly 'symbolic' in character, was it not inherently part of a broader agenda than merely doing business? Mr. Dar commented on the potential of this trade and the prospects for the future: in an improved scenario, he said the Kashmir Valley would be re-connected to the Central Asian trade networks as in the past, instead of depending on Indian trade alone. In a way, LoC traders could be considered investors, who were expecting future benefits.

As of November 2014, cross-LoC commodities were being exchanged at the LoC transit zone, and travellers also had to change buses because vehicles were not allowed to cross. The regulation of this mobility of bodies and goods against the immobility of the infrastructure (buses and trucks) can be related to uncertainty about the border space. This filtering of mobility can be regarded as an attempt by the states to exercise control over territory in a global context in which complete 'legal' absence of cross-border relations between states cannot be sustained.²⁰ Interaction can occur only once the separation imposed by the border space has been clearly stated. This filtering of mobility is about the 'normalization' of the border space as a space of separation in which a degree of 'legal' interaction is permitted between the divided parts, but this 'normalization' undermines local struggles that have a potentially divisive nature.

19 See Sengupta, Mahmud, and Choudhary, 'Cross-line of control'; Ali, *Cross-LoC Trade-Success*; Chari and Askari-Rizvi, 'Making borders irrelevant'.

20 Perhaps the only exception to this reality is the demilitarized zone between North and South Korea. Suk-Young, *DMZ Crossing*.

During an interview on the AJK side, in Muzaffarabad, a Pakistani retired brigadier who was responsible for the cross-LoC trade in AJK described the opportunities created by the cross-LoC exchanges. He said that the landscape was changing because shops and tea stalls had been opened along the route to Chakothi, whereas before there was nothing there. This director, who provided information on the details of the cross-LoC agreement, encouraged me to note down his positive view. He appealed to the humanitarian and economic aspect of the initiatives but avoided commenting on the political consequences. In his view, the cross-LoC activity was the result of an India-Pakistan agreement that benefited the AJK border area. However, he did not talk about what this implied for the relationship of AJK with Pakistan, given its semi-independent character. In his role as a Pakistani officer – and Pakistan is responsible for AJK's foreign affairs – his understanding of cross-LoC trade was more as a 'foreign' matter than a 'domestic' one.

This is not a minor issue, because of its political consequences and also because it preoccupies some members of the business community in Muzaffarabad. While some agreed to participate in this exchange activity, several traders I met raised objections about the manner in which the trade was being conducted. In their view, bureaucratic procedures such as the need to stop at the border for controls, to exchange goods and change buses, instead of continuing the journey straight away, undermined the political aspirations of AJK nationalism (in terms of defending their political reunion with the Kashmir Valley) and 'diluted the sixty-year-old conflict'. These views were expressed on condition of anonymity, and although it is not clear how relevant they are in AJK society they show the existence of a view that is critical of the dialogue process. A businessman of Kashmiri origin living in Muzaffarabad observed that the bureaucratic conditions under which this trade was carried out meant it could not be considered domestic, in the sense of an intra-Kashmir trade. He concluded: 'You have to stick to the border regulations. It is not free.'²¹ This man, probably in his early sixties, had no objections to the bus services – he confessed that he was applying to visit his family in the Kashmir Valley – but was of the view that the cross-LoC trade was a step toward the recognition of the LoC as a border. This was not just his own view, he clarified, but was a feeling shared by a number of people in AJK. Despite this opposition to the LoC trade because of its lack of freedom, he conceded that it was an opportunity for some because of the precarious economic position of AJK, a landlocked territory without significant economic resources.

21 Interview, Muzaffarabad, 27 September 2009.

To understand this, it is important to mention that AJK's economy depends on Pakistan.²² As a mountainous region, fertile soil for agriculture is limited and possibilities for industrial development are scarce. Moreover, AJK's important hydroelectric resources are under the control of Pakistan because they are essential for the country.²³ One of AJK's main sources of income is remittances from diaspora communities in the UK (mostly from those who originated in the area of Mirpur in the south), AJK migrants to the Gulf (mostly from the northern and central parts), and from the seasonal migration to other parts of Pakistan.²⁴ According to Nissar Hamdani, professor of economics at AJK University, investment in the region is discouraged by political uncertainty, although there is scope to establish some medium-sized industries.²⁵ AJK is poorly connected to the north and south; in fact, a significant volume of economic activity between Muzaffarabad and Mirpur takes place via Rawalpindi (proper Pakistan territory), as there are not better direct connections between the two cities through AJK territory. In this context, the so-called intra-Kashmir trade appears to be a good opportunity even though it is regulated by the Pakistani authorities.

During an interview with Mr. Bukhari, an entrepreneur in the food sector participating in the cross-LoC trade, he pointed out that despite its limitations this exchange was good for the people of AJK, and admitted that if conditions improved more people would join it.²⁶ This has to do with the fact that while in the Kashmir Valley the cross-LoC trade is seen primarily as symbolic in character, in Muzaffarabad it is perceived as an economic activity that can benefit the area, and probably limit its dependence on Pakistan. Moreover, unlike the Kashmir Valley, the bulk of the products traded from AJK are not locally produced because they come from Pakistan.

22 Snedden, *Untold Story*, 180-188.

23 A few of my interviewees in Muzaffarabad, including an official of the AJK Government and an engineer of the Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA), referred to Pakistan's plans in the hydro-electric sector as problematic for AJK. Despite these projects' location in AJK and involving the use of land (a scarce resource), it seems that issues such as the payment of royalties to the AJK Government and access to power are often not clear. These problems are also reflected in what is until present (2018) the main dam project in AJK, the Mangla dam, built in the 1960s. See Haines, *Rivers Divided*, 70-76.

24 It is difficult to find data on migration in AJK but based on a World Bank report Sengupta, Mahmud, and Choudhary have estimated the importance of remittances in AJK's economy compared with Pakistan as a whole. They note that AJK is 2 percent of Pakistan's population and receives 6.25 percent of remittances. Sengupta, Mahmud, and Choudhary, 'Cross-line of control', 13.

25 Interview with Prof. Syed Nisar Hussain Hamdani, Muzaffarabad, 24 September 2009.

26 Interview with Mr. Bukhari, Muzaffarabad, 10 March 2010.

Indeed, traders from Muzaffarabad complained about the toll of 20 rupees (in 2010) they had to pay each time the loaded trucks crossed the Pakistan-AJK border. As of November 2014, cross-LoC trade continued despite the lack of addressal of traders' demands for currency and banking facilities and improvements to the border infrastructure.

The traders must be state subjects, but such a status involves several possibilities.²⁷ Some of the traders I met have both Kashmiri and Pakistani identity cards, as they have residences in AJK and in Pakistan. Others are involved in the activity with Pakistani nationals as partners, a common practice of businesses in AJK because Pakistani citizens cannot buy property there. This is interesting because the initial figuration of the LoC economic exchange, conceived for those in the divided parts (as state subjects) and thereby legally attached to a place (as residents of a 'disputed' territory), is being subverted by informal practices of mobility (AJK residents having Pakistani partners, the Kashmir Valley's residents becoming middlemen for Sikh traders in the cross-LoC trade) and the mobility of commodities (AJK traders get the products they trade from Pakistan). Hence, what was initially framed as a political and economic initiative to induce change and create trust in a specific 'contained' territory is no longer confined to that boundary.

In reality, the Kashmir Valley is trading with Pakistan. This can be seen as a consolation prize for the Pakistani authorities, in the sense that although Pakistan is not in control of the Valley (territory), the country still benefits from this economic exchange. This trade also situates the Kashmir Valley in an advantageous position to gain access to a broader market, despite the limited list of permitted items for trade. However, the situation is particularly problematic to AJK supporters of an independent Kashmir, who see in the practice of cross-border trade a way to legitimize the LoC as a border, and thereby to reinforce separation (from the Indian side) and increase the AJK's dependence on Pakistan with the possibility of its ultimate absorption by that state.

C Mobility and fixation: transformations of the border space

Cross-border trade is considered a symbolic activity by those involved in it because the products are not freely exchanged in a 'intra-Kashmiri'

27 State subjects are citizens of the Jammu and Kashmir princely state. This form of modern territorial citizenship was developed at the beginning of the twentieth century to ensure that residents of the state would be able to secure employment in an administration dominated by outsiders. Zutshi, *Languages of Belonging*, 190.

space. The monitored movement of people and goods constitutes part of the 'normal regular activities' between states, and the bureaucratic processes attached to this movement imply aspects of border fixation. This transformation has an ideological character because it is a selective process by which movement across is forbidden to 'political subjects' – such as former militants or divided families who have moved to the Pakistani side since 1990 – as they are reminders of the 'disputed condition' of the border. Kashmiri nationalist groups have no say in this process. Moreover, no measures have been implemented to address the human rights situation, either in AJK or in the Kashmir Valley. In other words, the transformation of the border space through economic initiatives and the good-will cases of reuniting divided families takes place in a context of apparent immobility concerning the political conditions of these territories. Under different legal arrangements, both AJK and the Kashmir Valley continue to be administered under a state of exception.

The relationship of the border's filtering character with its fixity can also be examined as part of a wider international context, for example from the perspective of the Indian Government, which attempts to regulate the mobility of Kashmiris as Indians. For example, China maintains that Kashmir is a disputed territory, and for this reason Kashmiris travelling to China receive a separate visa stapled into their passports. The Indian Government has protested this practice.²⁸ The fixation of borders is an attempt to control the edges – the border of the state or the passport control at airports, among others – but does not necessarily mean attempts towards inclusion are made as signs of statehood. The fixing of the LoC is accompanied, at least on the Indian side, by 'normalization' processes that attempt to turn the 'conflicted' Kashmir Valley into a normal part of the Indian state. For a section of AJK traders, participation in cross-LoC trade is not a neutral activity because it has consequences for the political future of AJK. As a semi-independent territory, AJK as a distinct political space is shrinking in favour of a merger with Pakistan. Hence, the opening of the border poses a political dilemma for those advocating the creation of a different political setting.

28 The Government of China has maintained equal distance from both parties in the Kashmir dispute, but owing to the fact that India has territorial claims on the Aksai Chin as part of Kashmir and both countries maintain a border dispute in India's eastern sector regarding the region of Tawang (in the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh), China has adopted a policy of not recognizing the Indian passports of those living in Kashmir and Arunachal Pradesh, as if they were not entirely 'foreigners'. Ramachandran, 'Stapled visas'.

Border immobilities: separation across Kargil (Ladakh) and Baltistan

While the India-Pakistan dialogue allowed a limited exchange across the Kashmir Valley and AJK, this did not extend to Gilgit-Baltistan and Ladakh. The same LoC divides these other territories, but the local context differs substantially from that of the Valley and AJK. First, the border inhabitants of Baltistan and Kargil have not challenged the role of the LoC as a border, but they still disagree with the impossibility of interaction across it. Second, the establishment of the LoC in 1949 had the greatest impact on the new border districts, compared with more distant areas such as Hunza, Leh area or Jammu, for example.

Divided families have demanded the opening of the road between Skardu and Kargil to facilitate exchanges between villages on both sides and allow access to the neighbouring areas.²⁹ There are a few thousand divided families, some of them living less than 50 kilometres from each other, who can only meet after going through lengthy applications and travelling to the other side through the distant Wagah-Attari land route (flights are normally expensive and unaffordable for all but a few).³⁰ Others choose to meet in third-party countries such as Iraq, Iran, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia, often while performing religious pilgrimages. Although there are a few local activists and politicians on both sides putting pressure on their respective governments to address their case, at the time of writing (2018) India and Pakistan have not reached an agreement.

The forced separation of Baltistan and Ladakh poses an interesting case of border politics in relation to the Kashmir dispute. India and Pakistan have not agreed to follow steps like the cross-LoC initiatives between the Kashmir Valley and AJK along this border tract, despite the fact that the measure could gain more popular support there. The reason seems to be the existence of an open border dispute at the LoC's easternmost point: the struggle for the Siachen glacier.³¹ This dispute is the result of the development of modern technologies that facilitate the conquest of what was previously

29 There has been a demand to open a road between the largest village (or smaller town) of Khaplu and the border villages in Chhorbat La, a few hours away. However, there is no formal road linking both sides, since travel in the past was across the mountains. Scheduled meetings at border points such as those between AJK and the Kashmir Valley have been requested by those living in villages near the LoC through various associations.

30 This piece of news illustrates a normal case of the long journey undertaken by divided families to reunite with those who otherwise live very close. Shah and Jariwala, 'Homecoming'.

31 On the Siachen dispute, see Wirsing, 'War or peace', 18-20.

no man's land: in the Karachi Agreement of 1949 neither India nor Pakistan bothered with the territory beyond the map coordinate NJ9842, which should continue to the Chinese border. Controlled by India since 1984 and contested by Pakistan, military presence in this inhospitable area is only possible through the use of sophisticated equipment, although still at a high cost of human life such as occurred in April 2012, when some 129 Pakistani soldiers and eleven civilians died in an avalanche.³² The fight over the Siachen glacier has been often mentioned by my interlocutors from the border areas of Ladakh as the main obstacle to the normalization of cross-border relations.

There is also an economic (and ideological) component that should not be underestimated. My interlocutors in Baltistan indicated that Pakistan did not want to open the LoC due to the possibility of adverse consequences for Baltistan, a territory which Pakistan seeks to protect (securitize). Fears were expressed that if the border were opened Indian tourists would literally flood this economically weak region, and since the tourists would be better off and have different cultural values this tourism would have adverse effects on the society. These fears are connected with the common suspicion that India's negative influences are aimed at destroying Pakistan.³³ This ideological aspect undermines more real preoccupations connected with the economic imbalance of Gilgit-Baltistan with respect to the Kashmir Valley and Ladakh. Moreover, China's activities and interests in Pakistan are a source of concern for India, and a number of people I spoke with believe that if the border were opened the entire region could be destabilized. Members of the business community in Baltistan are aware of this broader context and maintain that it negatively affects the prospects of opening the LoC. Owing to the economic stagnation of Baltistan, which became more acute after 2001 because of diminishing of tourism in the region (one of the main sources of income), the Indian side of the LoC is seen as offering the greatest opportunities for local businessmen. As a tour operator from Skardu with experience on cultural tourism packages to northern Pakistan and Central Asia commented:

We know that many Indian tourists go to Ladakh and even now they travel up to Turtuk. So if the border were opened they could also come here and see this part. It will generate employment and we can benefit from it. The

32 Dawn, 'Desperate rescue efforts'; Parvaiz, 'Killer Siachen'.

33 The view that India aims for Pakistan's destruction is part of Pakistan's perception of India in military and strategic circles. However, this view is also part of the common domain, expressed by both ordinary people and educated persons.

Gilgitis are benefiting from businesses with China. They are very clever and we cannot compete with them. It is too far and costly. Then why the government [of Pakistan] does not allow our region to develop? We want the same and the only reachable area we have is toward the south. The road is very good. We have an airport.³⁴

At the same time, people are concerned about the potential deterioration of security and increase in sectarian violence in Pakistan, given the marginal and landlocked position of Baltistan. There are fears that the sectarian violence in Gilgit could spread to Baltistan, which at the time of writing in 2018 is relatively peaceful, and this could cause further instability at the border.³⁵ A well-educated teacher from Skardu, himself a Shia, who was critical of the Shia religious leadership in Baltistan and also considered the Shias of Gilgit as being intolerant, manifested disillusion about the present context in the following terms:

In India people live together regardless of their faith and we know about the life conditions of Shias in Kargil. They are neither marginalized nor prosecuted. The Indian state treats them well. However, you see how the situation is here. Now we had this incident [an attack on a bus along the KKH targeting Shia passengers] and things can turn worse. If we [Shias] here in Baltistan are killed, nobody would care about it. You know, we are very few. Who will defend us?³⁶

These broader geostrategic, economic, and religious issues are absent in attempts to address the border question in AJK and the Kashmir Valley. Although the AJK is economically dependent on Pakistan, it is not as marginal as Baltistan in terms of its proximity and connectivity to large urban centres. While the opening of the LoC connects AJK with the Kashmir Valley and Jammu, the LoC between Baltistan and Ladakh raises other concerns because of the proximity of China and the strategic character of the KKH, which links it with Pakistan. Moreover, violence against the Shia minority is almost non-existent in AJK and the Kashmir Valley. Hence, it is possible to conclude that the border context in Baltistan-Ladakh is different from that of the Valley and AJK; despite the LoC being the same in the two areas, it separates a different kind of space.

34 Interview, Skardu, 18 July 2013.

35 On the sectarian context in Gilgit, see Ali, 'Outrageous state'; Stöber 'Religious identities'. For Baltistan, see Mato Bouzas, 'Mixed legacies'.

36 Interview, Skardu, 15 July 2017.

The military appears to be an important actor in deciding the border's fate because of its own interests. A high-ranking bureaucrat of the Gilgit-Baltistan administration based in Islamabad admitted with a gesture during our meeting that the military was opposing the move.³⁷ This officer also explained how the legal and economic status of the region was controlled from Islamabad.³⁸ Unlike the Kashmir Valley and AJK, where the dispute is about moving (by military means) the LoC or transforming it into an open border, in Ladakh and Baltistan it is about keeping control of already-held territory. This can be best illustrated in the case of the Siachen glacier, but it is also evident in the monitoring of sparsely populated villages and mountain peaks such as in the Chorbit La region.

Although it is impossible to sustain the existence of unconquered land – or, as noted by Scott, ‘non-state space’ – in the twenty-first century, Baltistan and Ladakh resemble frontier areas where state control is marginal, except for the military presence. They have less importance for state integration because of their rural and sparsely populated condition, their relative remoteness and disconnection, and the lack of significant resources to exploit. Understandings of state space attach a great importance to territory as an essentially populated area, as an object and means of governance.³⁹ Whereas episodes of army confrontation in the Kashmir Valley and AJK quickly receive international attention, confrontation in Baltistan and Ladakh rarely makes headlines.

From the perspective of those affected, the main issue in Baltistan and Ladakh concerns separation rather than the legal status of the LoC: people do not challenge the border, but do demand it be opened. On both sides are groups that want their areas to be properly incorporated into either Pakistan or India, although for the latter the control of these border territories is mainly strategic, in terms of military control and access to neighbouring regions. Military control on behalf of both countries of geographical features such as mountain peaks and glaciers is part of ‘gaining access’ and is framed as a competition between the two. This competition is reminiscent of a sort of conquest, of who possesses control over the mountain peaks, the glaciers, and the rivers. The geostrategic context as defined by state institutions (government, military, and bureaucrats) and other actors (strategic analysts, pressure groups) influences decisions about patterns of local movement. In this respect, socio-spatial imaginaries, as discursive phenomena that

37 Interview, Islamabad, 2 May 2012.

38 See Mato Bouzas, ‘Territorialisation’, 208–211.

39 Jessop, *The State*, 124.

represent space for purposes of the mobilization of territory, substantiate state intervention by creating a context of uncertainty that needs to be managed.⁴⁰

Border work: normalizing the state space

From an international perspective, the image of people travelling across the LoC and goods being exchanged at what is known as the 'world's most dangerous border' (see Chapter 2) is a powerful one. However, the situation on the ground shows a more ambivalent picture about the transformation of the border. Nationalist groups in the Kashmir Valley represented by the Hurriyat platform and AJK nationalist groups contest the legitimacy of the LoC. This is shared by sections of the society in the Valley and AJK.⁴¹ At the same time, non-recognition of the LoC challenges the ambivalent status of 'Indian Kashmir' as an integral part of the Indian state. Moreover, the way the cross-LoC mobility of divided families and trade unfolds indicates the sensibilities that are emerging about the border space. As mentioned above, the implementation of a bureaucracy and technology to regulate the border exchange, along with fencing of the LoC from India (to keep threats away), helps sustain the idea that the LoC is becoming a normal border, despite continued differences. This idea of normality does not apply to the border area between Baltistan and Kargil, where strong disagreements about the control of some parts of the territory persist.

The border is becoming more difficult to cross for those who have been doing it 'illegally' for decades, while only those who have gone through the necessary bureaucratic procedures and possess the appropriate permits and identification documents are permitted to cross legally. This filtering character reminds us of what Mezzadra and Neilson conceptualize as 'differential inclusion', that is, the 'means for describing and analyzing how inclusion in a sphere, society, or realm can be subject to varying degrees of subordination rule, discrimination, and segmentation.'⁴² Differential

40 Ibid., 138-139.

41 There are no reliable data on the political preferences of those living in the border territories. My impression from fieldwork undertaken over the course of six years is that there is significant support in the Valley for separation from India, which does not necessarily mean support for the nationalist leadership. In fact, I noticed an increasing split between the leadership and society as a whole, in which particularly the youth are searching for new forms through which they can express political disagreement.

42 Mezzadra and Neilson, *Border as Method*, 159.

inclusion is a 'border method' of administering through the interplay of humanness (of divided families allowed to meet and traders conducting symbolic trade) and processes of securitization (reflected in fencing and regulation). It denotes a form of governance operating as a new rationality, a strategy of border institutionalization by agents of the state – army, border officials, police administration – to control these territories in new ways.⁴³ Since inter-state conflict and hostility is no longer sustainable, and dissent in these territories has not been channelled by democratic or more inclusive processes (in either AJK or the Kashmir Valley), India and Pakistan seek to gain control of these areas through non-military means that imply more sophisticated techniques of control. Gradually, the ambivalent and 'unruly' border space is being subsumed into the realm of the state space. This does not only affect the interventions that specifically concern the LoC, but also results in the transformation of the disputed character of these territories. The Indian and Pakistani sides of the Kashmir-disputed territories use different strategies to approach this process.

The 'return to normalcy' and 'normalization' policy in Indian Kashmir

Unlike in Pakistan, Indian governments have not shown much interest in claiming AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan, except for the continued depiction of these territories as part of India on maps.⁴⁴ Sporadic outbursts by chauvinist Hindu politicians that have gained prominence in the second decade of the twenty-first century can be seen more as an irritating issue than a real demand. India has never initiated a major military operation across the border, although it has occasionally incited border tensions for political purposes at home, such as during the serious border clashes in 2013, and it is held responsible for the increasing border tension since the summer of 2016 in which its army even allegedly crossed the LoC.⁴⁵

However, the Indian state has pursued a strategy of incorporating Kashmir into the realm of the Indian nation through the gradual transformation of the constitutional and legal status of the region, making it economically dependent on India and melting Kashmir's diversity into the secular Nehruvian

43 Ibid., 175-178. On the subject of governance as a form of neoliberal rationality, see Brown, *Undoing the Demos*, 122-131.

44 See Ministry of Home Affairs, *Mandate of Border Management Division*, in which the Government of India claims, in the first page, to have a 106-km border with Afghanistan (along the Wakhan corridor), the northern border of Gilgit division, but there is no reference to border management of this specific border tract. Accessed 10 May 2017.

45 BBC, 'India and Pakistan in Kashmir'; *The Caravan*, 'Surgical strikes'; Hussain, 'Mystery of'.

ideal of nationhood. Since the post-Partition period, central governments in Delhi have sought to intervene in Kashmir's domestic affairs, eroding the autonomy of the state as granted by the Indian Constitution, undermining its political party system, and using repressive policies to suppress local discontent. The consequences of this fragmentation are well known, as they gave way to armed conflict during the 1990s.

In the mid-2000s, a new political discourse on Kashmir promoted by the then-BJP-led government in Delhi and amplified by the mainstream media, both Indian and abroad, began to gain significance: the position held that in Kashmir there was a gradual 'return to normalcy' that could be exemplified by the increasing number of tourists visiting the Valley.⁴⁶ This socio-spatial discourse referred to a new context for the Valley in which, with the diminution of violence, there was a general perceived improvement in life conditions.⁴⁷ This improvement was observed in the resumption of economic activities previously affected by the periodic *hartals* (closing down of shops and businesses). Communications with the rest of India improved and institutions began to resume activities, in contrast to the paralysis they suffered during the violence (this including the university, hospitals, and sections of the state administration). The celebration of regular electoral processes in the state also helped convey this idea of normality. This new context claimed by the authorities, however, is intended to turn a blind eye on the consequences of more than a decade of violence perpetrated by the security forces that includes, among others, rape and torture, disappearances, and mass graves.

In this new narrative, tourism became the main indicator of normalization. Tourists (including religious pilgrims) to the Kashmir Valley have increased from some 200,000 in 2003 to more than 1,300,000 in 2011.⁴⁸ A traditional destination for European and American travellers in the past, Kashmir is now catering to the needs of the increasing Indian middle class and a growing number of travellers from other parts of Asia. This industry

46 See Kennedy, 'Tourists return'; *The Tribune*, 'Governor sees normalcy'; Kak, 'Kashmir's stone-pelters', 32-33. Bhan contextualizes this normalization as part of the policy of 'healing touch' initiated by the former chief minister Mufti Sayeed in 2002 and intended to heal the scars of violence and the consequences of militarization, *Counterinsurgency*, 12.

47 Militancy is assessed annually by the Indian Ministry of Home Affairs on the basis of the number of incidents and deaths caused by the Special Forces, civilians, and terrorists. According to the yearly reports, these figures for 2012 are ten times lower than in 2005, when violent activities were already decreasing compared to the previous decade. See Chadha, 'Time to withdraw'.

48 Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Jammu & Kashmir, 'Tourists coming to the Kashmir Valley'.

directly benefits tour operators, houseboat associations, and *shikara* (long boats) owners, among others, but its promotion also has clear political aims. Apart from those who wish to escape the heat of the Indian plains in the summer, other Indian visitors go to the Valley on government travel schemes providing paid vacations for bureaucrats. Families of soldiers and paramilitary forces deployed in the region (an unknown number that can amount to a few hundred thousands) are offered free tickets to visit them. During the summer season, the flights from several Indian cities that are continuously landing at Srinagar airport give the impression of intense activity.⁴⁹ In addition, the state government has implemented a number of credit facilities to allow the building of accommodation for tourists and hotels and guesthouses have mushroomed in the city at an incredibly fast pace. As some of my interviewees have critically commented, there seems to be a policy – which is also in the interest of some local groups – of ‘pumping as many visitors as possible into the Valley’.

Together with leisure tourism, religious pilgrimages have received promotion since the mid-2000s. These activities, albeit seasonal, are significantly modifying the Kashmir space on symbolic and material levels. Tourism reinforces the symbolic links of Kashmir with India, while Hindu pilgrimages underscore the Hindu character of Kashmir, albeit in a new fashion that suits India's Hindu right.⁵⁰ On a material level, the tourist-related economy creates a dependence on the Indian state – in terms of the continuation of incentives for travelling to the area and the management of the security situation, amongst others – but also involves other territorialization initiatives that are more sustainable over time. The most obvious case of this is, perhaps, the Amarnath yatra (see Chapter 2) and the controversy that arose in May 2008 concerning a plot of land initially allotted by the state government to the Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board (SASB), which manages the shrine. Although constituted by an Act of the Jammu and Kashmir State Assembly, SASB has an Indian component: the chief executive is a senior officer of the Indian Administrative Service. Local groups and organizations in the Valley protested this initiative because they considered it as an attempt of Indian Hindu nationalism to gain a foothold in the Kashmiri heartland. Large mobilizations took place during the summer months and in response Hindu right-wing groups from Jammu blocked access to the Valley.

49 Muzaffar, ‘36 Flights to operate’; Amin, ‘AirAsia to operate’.

50 The appropriation of the past by hinting at Muslim or Hindu sources to reshape Kashmir's contemporary identity is very much debated by state government institutions as well as by other relevant social groups in Kashmir society. See Zutshi, *Kashmir's Contested*, 298–316.

Under the guise of political normalization, several interventions have attempted to transform the landscape of the Valley. One contestation concerns the construction of separate colonies for ex-army servicemen and their families, also known as Sainik colonies. The plan to build one near the airport in Srinagar provoked agitation in 2016 because the State Subject Rule bars non-Kashmiris from possessing immovable property in the state.⁵¹ The army soldiers are not state subjects, except for the few Kashmiris enrolled in that institution. The building of Sainik colonies involves a legal aspect of India's sovereignty over the region; that is, the application of India's legislation and its extension to the territory of Jammu and Kashmir. While these colonies can be built anywhere in the Indian Union, the Jammu and Kashmir State enjoys a special autonomy according to the Constitution, and the ownership of immobile property there is restricted, irrespective of the fact that it is a disputed territory.

One crucial question in the normalization policy is the return of exiled Pandits. The governments led by A.B. Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh developed several schemes to facilitate the reinsertion of this community, but few have accepted these opportunities. After the arrival of Narendra Modi to power in Delhi and the PDP-BJP ruling coalition in the state in the 2014 elections, a plan was drafted to build separate enclaves for them in selected areas. This caused much anger among separatist leaders and social groups in the Valley, who perceived it as an attempt to change demographics for electoral purposes.⁵² Before the conflict began, Pandits used to live in neighbourhoods alongside Muslims, albeit maintaining a degree of separation.⁵³ In an interview well before the elections of 2014 (when the division of minorities was central in the campaign), a retired law professor expressed the problem in the following way:

Now the Indian Government wants to build separate enclaves for the Pandits who wish to return to the Valley and offer them jobs. We do not oppose their return. They are from here like us and they have lived with us. But the government wants this policy of creating division with the aim of changing the population's imbalance for electoral reasons.⁵⁴

51 Masood, 'Jammu and Kashmir moves'.

52 Motta, 'Sainik Colony'.

53 To gain an understanding the coexistence of these two religious groups in rural Kashmir in the 1960s, see the classical sociological work Madan, *Family and Kinship*.

54 Interview, Srinagar, 26 May 2011. Although such views may be seen as exaggerated, given the number of potential returnees, they illustrate that the topic is quite sensitive in the society.

A section of Kashmiri society understands these attempts by the Indian state as a way to undermine the conflict character of the Valley by segregating groups as a means of managing the existing social diversity. These interventions have similarities, despite the different historical trajectory, with colonization patterns in Palestine.⁵⁵

Hence, 'normalization' in the Kashmir Valley, as understood by the Indian and state governments, is an active policy sustained by the idea of a 'neoliberal peace' in which improvement of the economic situation will undermine the political issue. Moreover, normalization is about specific actions that address the conflict by separating the Muslim majority of the Valley from the state's minorities. This normalization can only be achieved by maintaining the legal situation of exception. Indian tourists and pilgrims are visiting the Valley because they feel the situation has improved, but also because of the presence of the Indian military which will protect them in the event of danger.⁵⁶ The security forces, especially the paramilitary, have a role in everyday life: they mix with the civilians when they are deployed in the streets and tourist areas, and they occupy civilian buildings in different neighbourhoods, in addition to setting up observation posts (facing streets), barbed wire, and traffic blocks.⁵⁷

To sustain this 'normal' context, the Indian state has also engaged in a dialogue with Kashmiri society by sending interlocutors from New Delhi to address potential sources of disagreement. The outcome, *A New Compact with the People of Jammu & Kashmir*, was made public in May 2012, and provided an overview of the most important issues for ordinary people and social groups in Kashmir, offering conclusions similar to earlier documents that had been elaborated for the same purpose and made public in 2006-2007.⁵⁸ The report does not question the fact that Jammu and Kashmir is an entity of the Indian state (page 2), although it does recognize its social diversity and proposes the creation of several degrees of autonomy for some territories such as Ladakh.

55 The historical context of Palestine is different because there was a clear colonization pattern meant to expel the Palestinians from their territories, which has not occurred in Kashmir; see Pappe, *The Ethnic*. However, the politics of identity in the sense of dividing and separating different communities along religious and political lines is certainly an issue in the state of Jammu and Kashmir and shares similarities with the case of Israel. See BBC, 'Kashmir: Outrage'; IANS, 'Geelani-led Hurriyat'.

56 Normalization is strongly connected to the imposition of tight security control in which the state of Jammu and Kashmir has little room for manoeuvre. For example, the NC leader Omar Abdullah, who has close ties to Indian political elites in the Congress Party, was elected as chief minister of the state in 2008 and promised to suppress the AFPSA, but he was unable to negotiate the demilitarization.

57 Bhat, 'Captive city'.

58 Kumar, Ansari, and Padgaonkar, *A New Compact*; Mato Bouzas, *India y Pakistán*, 119-121.

Normalization through exceptional rule: compartmentalization of the border space

Popular unrest has become a permanent feature of the Kashmir Valley since 2010, when the stone pelting movement (youths throwing stones at the paramilitary forces after Friday prayers) gained momentum. Despite the limited space for showing disagreement and the increasing refinement of the technology of repression and surveillance, new forms of resistance have been articulated, as evidenced during the deep crisis of the summer of 2016, after the killing of Burhan Wani, a popular militant from Hizbul Mujahideen. This violence has coexisted with an image of normalization, as depicted in the idyllic images of tourists staying in houseboats by the banks of the Dal and Nilgiri lakes. At the same time, as I observed during my own visits, curfews imposed in the old city of Srinagar did not disturb the economic activity in the tourist areas close to the Dal Lake and the middle- and upper-class resident areas of Rajbagh in the south of the city.

As I noticed during my interactions with the Srinagar police, curfews are no longer announced but are instead arbitrarily imposed as part of normal life or simply announced in the local newspapers as 'travel restrictions'. In this respect, the context in the Kashmir Valley echoes Agamben's reflection that 'the state of exception has become the rule' in developed societies.⁵⁹ However, the legal state of exception does not mean a 'normative void', and does not necessarily imply complete isolation – i.e., the Kashmir Valley is not a separated place or 'camp', to follow Agamben's thinking.⁶⁰ Rather, the context of legal exceptionalism allows the adoption of new techniques of compartmentalization for the reshaping of these spaces to make them 'normal' state spaces in which the political, shaped by conflict and resistance, is marginalized and suppressed. As Mezzadra and Neilson point out in the cases they study, with a focus on the multiplication of labour, border zones are 'sites where norms can be analysed in the making and in their constant adjustment to changing circumstances, including their relations and conflicts with other norms.'⁶¹ In the case of the Kashmir Valley, the normalization and fencing of the border goes hand in hand with the normalization and compartmentalization of the border space. These interventions, and their associated norms, aim at transforming the border space into normal state space.

59 Agamben, *Stato di Eccezione*, 110–111.

60 Mezzadra and Neilson, *Border as Method*, 236.

61 Ibid.

Thus, in my view, 'normalcy' and 'security' represent strategies (as in creating spatial imaginaries) in which the sovereign power of the nation-state (in this case the Indian state) is being re-asserted – even if as an illusion – in new ways over a territory whose sovereignty has been contested since decolonization.⁶² Normalization of the space within the edges – be it the Kashmir Valley, AJK, Gilgit-Baltistan, or Ladakh – goes in parallel with the opening and fencing, understood in terms of enclosure, of the border space as state space.⁶³ This occurs as part of a specific global socio-economic context characterized by heterogeneity in which complete isolation through borders is no longer possible and therefore mobilities have to be filtered and managed (or mismanaged) in new ways. The state form still matters, particularly for those who have not attained it, such as many disputed and colonized territories.

Conclusion

The decision by the states of India and Pakistan to open the LoC is based on the assumption that conflict cannot continue in a world context where mobility and economic exchange under globalization processes are no longer (if they ever were) contained within state borders. The opening of the LoC must be understood as part of a neoliberal rationality whose main aim is the management of risk as a matter of governance, rather than addressing matters of social justice. In other words, conflict can be managed, and its resolution postponed. Yet the implementation of cross-LoC mobilities – of people and goods – and the views of actors and groups involved in them, as well as those who oppose these movements, evidence the gradual conversion of the LoC into a border.

Mobility is filtered through regulations about who and what can cross and under which conditions. This performativity involves an understanding of the border space as one that is being 'normalized'. At present, mobility is only allowed in some points in the border tract between AJK and the Kashmir Valley. In the border area of Ladakh and Baltistan, however, the persistence of the border as a barrier denotes the existence of a different spatial imaginary in which strong disagreements persist about the border space. The views of people living on both sides of the LoC reflect strong disagreements about the way mobility and immobility on the LoC is being managed, although they see the existing limited connections as a positive step.

62 Brown, *Walled States*, 25. This illusion has very material consequences at the social level.

63 In the case of Gilgit-Baltistan, see Mato Bouzas, 'Territorialisation'.

Rather than making the border irrelevant, the opening of the LoC instead implies its fixity as a border. This is not only sanctioned by the military and other security agencies dealing with aspects of security and bureaucratic control, but is also endorsed by the participation of people (divided families) and specific social groups (traders) in the cross-LoC mobility. Interventions in the border territory are intended to convey a certain idea of normalization, as shown in the Kashmir Valley, in which instances of conflict and resistance are being erased through denial and their compartmentalization as separate issues. This normalization represents new ways in which postcolonial states attempt to gain control over their edges.

Conclusion

The Politics of Belonging in the Kashmir Borderland

Abstract

For those living in the disputed territories, the Kashmir issue is expressed in terms of the impossibility of being part of a political project or taking a decision about their own political future. This sentiment is mainly articulated in terms of belonging: by departing from an experience of dispossession or rootlessness to trace a relationship with a multitude of places and spaces. The literature on belonging developed by feminist and migration studies provides interesting insights for grasping the spatial dimension of conflicts about borders such as the Kashmir dispute. Belonging necessarily embodies a translocal and transnational experience and therefore generates specific knowledge about international reality and the way the world is ordered.

Keywords: Kashmir borderland, belonging, politics of belonging, displacement, cosmopolitanism, world order

In this book I have tackled the question of how the Kashmir dispute is understood on both sides of the LoC by focusing on the space of conflict, that is, what is perceived as contested by those living in the affected territories. This space of conflict coincides with the borderland, and is characterized by differentiation done through bordering processes that set spatial hierarchies which are critical for interpreting international reality. As highlighted in Chapter 2, although not recognized as political entities, borderlands are essential spaces for the inquiry about transformations in the international reality. The adoption of a borderland perspective for examining the Kashmir conflict has underscored the difference between the representation of the dispute as an interstate and intrastate affair, and the manifestation of conflict in everyday life in the disputed territories. In so doing, this perspective has unravelled the problem, caused by territorial fixation, of people's exclusion and marginalization from state belonging, which is

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contrasted with their experiences of 'multi-territoriality' or the possibility of accessing or connecting to diverse territories.¹

For those living in the disputed territories, the Kashmir issue is essentially about the impossibility of participating in a political project or taking a decision about their own political future. This sentiment is mainly articulated in terms of belonging – that is, by tracing a relationship with a multitude of places and spaces – but also in terms of departing from an experience of dispossession or rootlessness. During this research, belonging has proved to be a key concept for understanding what is at stake in this conflict. This concept entails a more relational understanding of the position of people living in these areas as members of one collective or the other – something that is usually overlooked in favour of identity-based understandings of the dispute.²

In this concluding chapter I address how the study of belonging is a useful analytical tool for addressing the spatial dimension of conflicts about borders. Belonging serves to uncover a crucial aspect of politics related to territorial fixity and identity which are usually assumed as implicit in the development of ethnic conflicts. Since it has a relational character and entails various allegiances, the study of belonging encourages the exploration of cosmopolitan views that are usually undermined in identitarian narratives, such as those that have tended to dominate the study of the Kashmir dispute since the mid-1990s.³ A focus on belonging can provide new ways to address conflicts through the exploration of more inclusive politics.

The chapter is structured as follows. I first briefly illustrate what the study of belonging can reveal in relation to Kashmir through the case of Ahmed, a single individual who is part of a collective that has been neglected in the dispute. Then, I draw on the literature from migration and gender studies, highlighting its relational understanding of place and identity and demonstrating how this relational approach can be useful to examine how people living in disputed border contexts articulate claims for recognition. Finally, since belonging is political, I address the politics of belonging in relation to forms of bordering, that is, the ways in which the world is ordered and differentiated.

1 Haesbert, *Desterritorialización*, 284, 300.

2 In identifying understandings of the dispute, I refer to the implications of drawing assumptions about the conflict through employing categories such as 'Ladakhis', 'Kargilis', 'Mirpuris', 'Kashmiris', and so on, which are understood as more or less established collectivities living in specific locations. I do not ignore that boundary-drawing has activated and articulated identities in specific ways. My interest is to show that people living in these disputed territories have a more dynamic and plural relationship in dealing with each other and relating to the various locations than the one provided by identity explanations.

3 On cosmopolitanism, see Vertovec and Cohen, *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism*, 1–22.

The case of Ahmed

On a hot summer afternoon in Baltistan, I met a group of displaced people from the border area between Baltistan and Ladakh. Among them was Ahmed, a man in his mid-seventies, who narrated the following biographical account in which borders and national allegiances play a central role.

In 1963 I went to Skardu [from a village in Chorbat La area, eastern Baltistan] for a court case regarding a land dispute. Once there, I joined the army as a soldier. I was married and since I got this job, I used to visit my family once a year for one or two months [....] In 1965 I was posted in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, in front of Baramulla [a district and a city in the Kashmir Valley on the Indian side]. I was in the regular army, but I was asked, along with others, to disguise as *muhajideen* and to infiltrate through the Kel sector. This was during the rule of Ayub Khan [....] In 1971 I was posted in Kel and we were exchanging fire for 14 days. Then the whole unit was sent back to Gilgit. There I asked about my village and the major informed me that we 'were eating salt', a polite way to say things were not going well there. I flew back to Skardu and I got the news [....] My village and my family were now on the Indian side. One day I went to Fraono village, the new border, just in front of the newly acquired Indian territory [....] There, I also learnt that the commander in charge during the fighting was Major Bashir, a Bengali major and that he had no interest for Pakistan. In fact, he was defending Indian interests because at the time Bengalis were fighting against Pakistan and the Indian Government was supporting them [the Bangladesh Liberation War]. Pakistanis were not interested in these areas because they were mountain regions, although India was willing to return the villages [in the peace conversations of Simla in 1972]. The Pakistani Prime Minister Bhutto negotiated the return of villages in Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Lahore sector but not ours [those in Chorbat La]. The government gave our villages away. We did not get any compensation for the resettlement [....] Here [in Pakistan] we suffered a lot. Those who remained on the Indian side also suffered for many years. They could not move, their houses were constantly searched and people were harassed. We know that. (Interview conducted in July 2014 in Urdu and Balti with the assistance of a translator).

Ahmed's story poses some questions about the difference between the representation of conflicts and how they are perceived and lived by those affected. Ahmed's testimony is that of a single person, one of the several

thousand displaced people in India from the border areas dividing Baltistan and Ladakh and hundreds of thousands from the Kashmir Valley and Jammu living in Pakistan-controlled AJK. It can be said that the story of the collectivity that Ahmed represents is not on the map, in the sense that the places he mentions (remote, sparsely populated villages) and the historical events associated with these places have been largely ignored in the literature on the Kashmir conflict, or have been mentioned only in passing.⁴ This may have something to do with the scale of the 'international' – understood as being beyond the state level (that is, beyond the state border) or defined essentially by border-crossing or transnationalism. This scale hides the level of those living between these spaces, such as the case of borderland territories, from analysis. To make sense of the international, Didier Bigo proposes the use of field studies, as they 'allow us to distance ourselves from the academic (and philosophical) illusion of the primacy of discourse, obliging us to reflect further on the technologies of power and resistance.'⁵

This ignoring of the collectivity that Ahmed represents – despite the geopolitical importance of the area in which these people live – can also be related to the focus on larger groups in international studies. These larger groups are normally referred to simply as 'actors', as if they were embodying individual action, even though there has been increasing recognition in recent decades that individuals also count in international affairs. To some degree, Ahmed's biographical trajectory as a soldier tells about the vicissitudes of the of the India-Pakistan conflict that began in 1947 to take control of the former princely state of Jammu and Kashmir.

Ahmed is neither a proper Pakistani citizen nor a Kashmiri.⁶ He is not a proper Pakistani citizen because the area where he lives is considered 'disputed' and not integrated into Pakistan's constitutional framework. Consequently, those living in Gilgit-Baltistan lack basic constitutional rights, e.g., they can neither vote nor be elected in the Pakistani general elections.⁷ Despite this, Ahmed, like many others, feels that the political aspects of the Kashmir dispute are not his concern, except for the fact that the conflict caused him to be separated from his village and family and dramatically changed his life.

When asked about their understanding of the Kashmir dispute, Ahmed and the members of other divided families in Baltistan underlined the

4 Bonnett, *Off the Map*.

5 Bigo, 'The Möbius ribbon', 98.

6 On political transformations in Gilgit-Baltistan since Partition, see Chapter 1.

7 Mato Bouzas, 'Mixed legacies'.

shared experiences they went through after Partition. They did not frame their views on their condition as related to their minority status as Baltis (non-Kashmiris), but rather on their precarious position living in a disputed area characterized by a lack of basic constitutional rights. In other words, their views about themselves were connected to their position in a wider structure, to how they fit (or did not fit) into the political space formed by the figuration of the border.⁸ These views were also related to the problematic relationship between 'being' (as a political subject) and attachment to a 'place' (as a physical or a symbolic territory) that is implied in the notion of belonging.

Understanding belonging: space and identity

The study of belonging has found a fertile niche in works on migration and feminist epistemologies. Belonging is a useful analytical tool for addressing the spatial dimension of conflicts about borders.⁹ In migration studies, such as the work of Floya Anthias, it is connected to the relational position of migrants in terms of the construction of a 'we-ness' and 'otherness' and the negotiation of this ambivalence.¹⁰ Eva Youkhana has examined belonging as a form of placemaking through migrants' spaces of representation.¹¹ In the case of gender studies, this notion revolves around the construction of women as a group.

Since belonging entails territoriality, its study can contribute to the theoretical debates about the framework of international reality. It questions approaches from the perspectives of political realism – which does not pay attention to individual subjecthood – and constructivism – which tends to consider identity as embodying a high degree of cohesion.¹² In other words, focusing on belonging challenges assumptions about the way the world is ordered. For this purpose, I refer to the Kashmir case to explore

8 By 'figuration', I refer to the concept used by Norbert Elias to express that there is no such thing as an individual separated from society and that individuals are the product of (and are constrained by) their interactions within a network of relations. Elias, *What is Sociology?*, 128-133.

9 Hedetoft and Hjort, *The Postnational Self*; Youkhana, 'A conceptual shift'; Yuval-Davies and Stoetzler, 'Imagined boundaries'; Yuval-Davies, Sannabiran, and Vieten, *Situated Politics*; Anthias, 'Thinking through the lens'.

10 Anthias, 'Thinking through the lens', 8.

11 Youkhana, 'A conceptual shift', 16-19.

12 I refer to the fact that identity explanations may obfuscate other important issues that are connected to the question of access to resources (broadly understood).

contexts under which individuals and groups claim belonging in the disputed territories and the form these claims take. Drawing on Yuval-Davis' work, I call this the politics of belonging, which 'comprises the specific political projects aimed at constructing belonging in particular ways to particular collectivities that are, at the same time, themselves being constructed by these projects in very particular ways.'¹³ This definition implies considering both hegemonic political projects and the articulation of forms of resistance to them. Both are addressed in this chapter.

While undertaking fieldwork on both sides of the LoC over the period 2009-2014, I paid attention to how the people living in these territories framed the conflict, in contrast to how it is examined at the state and international levels. Although the research outcomes found at the specific sites discussed in this book cannot be considered representative of the whole region, they certainly illustrate how the Kashmir issue is perceived by some of those affected by the conflict in the specific political context in which they live. This work has tried to make sense of this other space – that is, the situation in the disputed territories – and highlight its relevance for possible points of agreement to address the political resolution of the conflict.

Expressions of belonging appear as claims for recognition in contexts of dramatic socio-economic transformation and political uncertainty involving high surveillance and various forms of violence. In the following discussion, I use belonging as an analytical perspective to understand ongoing struggles about placemaking, which constitute the politics of belonging mentioned above. This is tantamount to the Rancieran definition of politics as a moment of contestation that implies the disruption of the established order of domination by one party seeking inclusion (or recognition) on equal terms. It equates to the search of those who do not belong (*la part des sans-part*) for inclusion.¹⁴

Belonging is generally understood in relation to being in one place or being part of a collective and making claims to or 'longing' for other place(s). In this respect, I argue that belonging constitutes a form of displacement that is worth investigating, as it reveals the formation of subjectivities that question existing bordering processes. This can be seen in issues ranging from the treatment and integration of minorities, new waves of migrants within the state polity, and refugees, to the enforced separation of groups

¹³ Yuval-Davies, 'Belonging and the politics', 198.

¹⁴ Rancière, *La Méseintente*, 169-185. For a more contextualized understanding of the term, see Chambers, *The Lessons of Rancière*, 41-45.

across borders, and the militarization of various zones throughout the world. The study of belonging has found a productive niche in feminist epistemologies and migration studies which intersect with the theme of borders and security. For this reason, depending on the feasibility of fieldwork, the study of belonging offers a more discursive and non-hierarchical way to understand the feelings and demands of groups caught in conflict zones. It allows the deconstruction of dominant security discourses and the unveiling of hegemonic power hierarchies.

Belonging, although a form of identity, does not entail the same boundary-drawing and has a relational character. If one defines oneself, or is defined by others, as a Kashmiri, it is not the same as acknowledging that one belongs to 'Kashmir'. Ahmed, the soldier quoted above who fought in the regular Pakistani army, refers to the 'Pakistanis' as a collective, hierarchically above him and uninterested in the fate of his own people. Ahmed shows affection towards his people (those living in Chorbāt La area), from whom he has been displaced, and does not claim to be Pakistani (Pakistanis are the Others) despite having lived most of his life in a territory controlled by Pakistan and having been enrolled in the Pakistani army. While both belonging and identity indicate membership and may be gradual processes, they do not entail the same intensity.¹⁵ Belonging means tracing a relationship in which a degree of ambivalence and distance is implied when drawing the boundary of membership, whereas identity definitions offer less room for doubt about the group's boundaries and are often more permanent in time – not to mention that some characteristics of identity, such as language and sex, are not easy to change.¹⁶

Since the 1990s the social sciences, international studies in particular, have experienced a 'cultural turn' fostered by the development of constructivist and postmodernist theories. This has resulted in new approaches to the study of conflicts and political processes that mainly affect non-Western societies. In the study of 'ethnic' conflicts, this cultural turn has meant an overemphasis on what Brubaker defines as 'groupism' – a reification of the bounded character of groups as units for social analysis – which in the case of conflicts is dominated by ethnic identity ascriptions.¹⁷

In his study of relations between the Hungarian minority and the Romanians in Transylvania, Rogers Brubaker notes that most of the protagonists

15 Hedetoft and Hjort, *Postnational self*, viii-x.

16 Bauman, *Identity: Conversations*, 76-80.

17 Brown, 'Borders and identity', 119; Brubaker, 'Without ethnic groups', 164, also see the extended version by the same author, *Ethnicity without Ethnic Groups*, 10-20.

of ethnic conflict are not ethnic groups per se but organizations, broadly understood.¹⁸ He calls into question the category of ethnic groups, and ethnicity in general, as a domain of analysis. Brubaker's contribution to the understanding of ethnicity is important to address the difference between identity and belonging. He points out that 'ethnic' identity depends on the degree of mobilization by organizations. The same can be found in the study of cultural conflicts in South Asia, in the sense that political institutions – particularly those of the central authorities of the state – can create and perpetuate identity politics.¹⁹

However, it is not always clear whether organizations can be identified as more or less separate from the 'people' or 'groups' for whom they claim to speak. The analysis of minorities in a post-socialist state may well differ from that in a postcolonial state because of the different political forms of institutionalization and social cultures. In the case of the Kashmiri nationalism in the Kashmir Valley in India, for example, the categories of 'Kashmiri', 'Indian', and 'Pakistani' can be viewed from the viewpoint of a number of organizations that can be identified as actors in the conflict. However, this conflict has been going on for decades and society as a whole has taken up the political cause in different manners, so 'ethnic' assumptions may contain some 'regime of truth'. As Nirvikar Singh demonstrates in his study of the conflicts in Punjab and Kashmir, political institutions alone do not explain cultural (ethnic) conflicts because they usually overlap with identity markers, which are used as tools for political mobilization. Interestingly, Singh relates the use of identity markers to weak institutionalization.²⁰ The latter indicates that in contexts of uncertainty (in terms of access to resources) identity affiliations provide a sort of 'safe haven' through membership, but in general it is not easy to draw a boundary between 'organizations', the society, and 'groups'.

During my research in the Kashmir Valley, I interviewed people (some of them victims of violence) who were critical of nationalist organizations such as the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), the Jamaat-e-Islami (Jamaat), or the nationalist umbrella organization Hurriyat. Respondents occasionally admitted they did not publicly express their dissent because of fear, but they also acknowledged respect for these organizations because their leaders were considered 'martyrs' for Kashmir and they worked for the community, that is, the organizations supported the families of the

18 Brubaker, 'Without ethnic groups', 173.

19 Singh, 'Cultural conflict', 344–346.

20 Ibid.

deceased as well as former militants who were in need.²¹ Being 'Kashmiri' has been equated by the Indian state and some academic works with being Muslim (mainly Sunni) from the Valley and sympathizing with the separatist cause.²² However, being 'Kashmiri' also includes other religious and language categories from the Valley, such as Pandits (Kashmiri speakers following the Hindu religion), Sikhs (Punjabi speakers following the Sikh religion), and beyond the Valley (Pahari speakers and Muslims living in the mountains west of the Kashmir Valley) on the basis of their legal status as 'State Subjects' – a form of citizenship based on *jus soli* (birth in a territory) which evolved in the colonial period.²³ Experiences from my fieldwork have shown that, despite the conflict and the consequent narrowing of social boundaries, 'Kashmiri' is still a broad category in everyday understanding. A Sikh interviewee explained: 'I am Kashmiri. My ancestors came from Punjab in the nineteenth century, but we are State Subjects. We are from this soil. I speak Kashmiri although I use Punjabi at home.'²⁴ At the same time, my findings show that the society in the Kashmir Valley and the organizations directly involved in the conflict are interrelated through the dynamics of violence and are therefore not easy to differentiate.²⁵

The point is that what is usually referred to as an identity marker is framed in terms of a high degree of cohesion or 'groupness' which, in most cases, is nowhere present in the societies labelled with these identity markers. The fluidity among social groups was already pointed out by Barth in 1969, and the understanding of identities as more or less stable categories

21 For example, one of my respondents admitted going to demonstrations in support of the nationalist cause because of pressure from the neighbourhood. Criticism of the nationalist organizations is also present, for example, the idea that the nationalist leaders receive money from the Pakistani intelligence agencies. At the time of the research, for example, there were rumors (and jokes) circulating in the city of Srinagar regarding the ongoing unrest caused by the 'stone pelting' movement (throwing stones at the paramilitary forces after Friday prayers) by saying that youngsters involved were paid by the Jamaat. This was a critique of Jamaat.

22 See, for example, Wirsing, *Kashmir in the Shadow*, 157. I refer to the fact that arguments about the Kashmir dispute, especially on the conflict in the Kashmir Valley, are articulated around the question of the 'Muslimness' of Kashmiris. This implies the idealization of a Muslim community as part of a common shared Kashmiri identity with non-Muslims, *Kashmiriyat*, or its more problematic consideration as a separate group (identity) as part of a 'melting pot' (underlining the existence of many identities in Kashmir). The latter implies that Kashmiri Muslims of the Valley are troublesome in their political demands because their mobilization also exacerbates the demands from other groups.

23 For more detail, see Kaur, *Political Awakening*, 26–35; Rai, *Hindu Rulers*, 252–253.

24 Interview, Srinagar, 3 May 2011.

25 This can be seen through the journalistic account of a kidnapping of foreigners in the Kashmir Valley in 1995, Levy and Scott-Clark, *The Meadow*.

is a product of Western state institutionalization and the expansion of this political form across the world, which has implied the classification, codification, and subjection of people as the Others.²⁶ Recent works that deal with historical forms of resistance, such as in the history of the agrarian peoples of the uplands of Southeast Asia by James Scott, conclude that identity is a 'political choice', a strategy related to a context which changes and re-adapts according to circumstances.²⁷ It is therefore worth looking at the contexts in which these categories operate and, in addition to the analysis of 'units' or 'actors', it is necessary to consider the positionality of the social groups included in the category – in terms of social background, gender, biographical experiences, worldviews, and expectations – to grasp the power relations that are involved in identity making.

Because it challenges existing borders, the study of belonging unfolds the problematic of place and space not only for groups caught in contested borderlands, but also for those who have been displaced for whatever reason. The focus on belonging unveils ongoing struggles about placemaking which question the normative ways the world is assumed to be divided. As a form of displacement – being neither completely 'here' nor 'there' – the study of belonging entails imagination, as does the study of identity. Tracing relations to a specific space is an act of imagination that implies subverting the current state-of-things but also reflects a preoccupation of the collectivity which transcends an individual's experience.²⁸ This can be expressed as a form of nostalgia about the past or as an emphasis on being part of a larger community (beyond existing borders). In this sense, belonging implies both recognition and differentiation and needs to be examined against the current context in which people are being bordered.

Belonging across borders as claims to recognition

Since the focus on belonging challenges existing borders (and thereby conceptions of place/space), articulations of belonging are framed within specific contexts that need to be considered. How can people living in a disputed border territory articulate views about the context in which they live and about the world in general? To situate this question, it is necessary to

26 Barth, *Ethnic Groups*.

27 Scott, *The Art of Not Being*, 280-281 and 329.

28 See the discussion by Bottici on Hanna Arendt's understanding of imagination. Bottici, *Imaginal Politics*, 96-98.

point out at least three main issues. First, people living in disputed contexts may have an ambivalent status as citizens – due to either existing legal systems or a situation of violence and instability – and this affects how they can speak. Second, conflict, when it lasts for a significant period, generates its own social dynamics of fragmentation in which views about the community become severely affected. Third, a border is the product of a specific historical construction, which is normally imposed upon those living in its surrounding areas.

The account of Ahmed mentioned above was related to me during a group meeting with displaced families from villages that were originally part of Pakistan, but which were then captured by India during the war of 1971. The displaced people and separated families caused by this conflict may number a few thousand in Baltistan. Most of them have had to fend for themselves since then, without receiving any compensation from the state. Only a few families have received support from wealthy individual philanthropists who donated plots of land. Similar to others gathered during my fieldwork, Ahmed's account reflects the sense of disillusionment with the lack of state support despite the fact that they opted for Pakistan at the time of Partition. The same sentiment is expressed with regard to the ambivalent constitutional status of Gilgit-Baltistan, because of which residents of the region feel excluded as state citizens.²⁹ As a soldier who participated in military operations of the Pakistani army to capture the Kashmir Valley, Ahmed (and others in Baltistan) sees the Kashmir dispute as the fight for the Kashmir Valley, which is different from his own area. However, Ahmed and other respondents in Baltistan admit that their 'suffering', the political uncertainty about the place where they live, is 'because of Kashmir' since they know – as shown in Ahmed's narration – that their border region (between Baltistan and today's border sub-district of Kargil in Ladakh) is of less importance for Pakistan. A feeling prevails that the LoC has been imposed on them, not only ignoring previous administrative divisions, but also cutting family ties, ignoring previous interactions, and destroying the political aspirations of various groups. For those living in Baltistan, as well as those in other parts of the Kashmir borderland, there is the perception that they had more access to other places and regions (e.g., Xinjiang, Tibet, Srinagar, Simla, and Deoband) before the LoC was established. Baltistan once enjoyed a certain centrality in that world and the present articulations of belonging aim to regain that past. Hence, claims of belonging are based on readings of the present and oriented towards certain aims.

29 Hong, 'Liminality and resistance'.

The study of belonging through biographical accounts of the past, present, and future expectations makes it possible to trace specific understandings of space that denote the forms in which people are bordered and their resistance to them. In a way, claiming belonging is a form of empowerment as it implies recognition, or becoming visible. When various groups in AJK claim to belong to Kashmir (as the entity existing before 1947), when those in Baltistan claim to belong to the Tibetan milieu, and when those in the sub-district of Kargil on the Indian side relate themselves to Baltistan, they are showing their discontent with the ways they are being identified and represented within the dispute – as waiting to become part of Pakistan for those in AJK and Baltistan, and as the loyal guardians of the Indian borders, in the case of those living in the sub-district of Kargil. This does not necessarily mean they consider themselves to be ‘Kashmiri’, ‘Tibetan’, or ‘Balti’, as identity markers, since what they emphasize is the act of ‘sharing’ meanings and experiences.³⁰ The claim of being part of a larger community that transcends existing borders is a reaction to the current marginal position of these groups and is articulated through cultural expressions that challenge the existing borders – preoccupations with past ties, the sharing of language and cultural references, and displays of symbologies. This is because there is no way to articulate alternative forms of dissent in these highly militarized areas, where surveillance is part of everyday life. On the surface articulations of belonging do not appear as subversive as other forms of resistance, since they operate within the constraints of the limited existing political space, but they do imply a re-positioning from an ascribed identity category in the seeking of recognition.

In this light, it is worth considering the observations made by Etienne Balibar in his article ‘Uprisings in the Banlieues’, where he describes the case of the violent revolts that affected the French *banlieues* (suburbs) and were perpetrated by groups uprooted from the French state because they simply did not count in the social and economic programmes of an increasingly de-democratized society.³¹ Balibar discusses the use of violence as an indication of the inability of these groups to articulate demands as a collective. They did not have the language or access to the system and were therefore excluded from it. Similar views apply to those living in the disputed Kashmir territories, in the sense that spaces to claim dissent are almost non-existent and the boundaries of the permissible are not explicit. This can be seen in the stone pelting movement that erupted in

30 Pfaff-Czarnecka, ‘Multiple Belonging’, 15.

31 Balibar, ‘Uprisings’.

the Kashmir Valley in 2010, when youth confronted the Indian paramilitary forces deployed in the Valley and particularly in urban areas since 1990 (the beginning of the conflict) by throwing stones at them. Balibar later relates the inability of the groups from the *banlieues* to make collective demands to their situation of exclusion from the system, which is also part of a de-democratization process in the public sphere that is implied in neoliberal governance, a term he borrows from the work of Wendy Brown.³² Leaving aside the specific question of de-democratization, a discussion of which is beyond the scope of this work, Balibar makes the interesting point that the state (national) form becomes irrelevant both from below, as it excludes and further marginalizes the weaker groups, and also from above, as it is unable to control the multinational capitalist groups who operate irrespective of state regulations.³³ Despite the differences of context, similar conclusions can be drawn from Kashmir's disputed territories with regard to the role of the state. The ambivalent legal status of the inhabitants of these territories makes them vulnerable. At the same time, this legal ambivalence allows interventions from above such as the building of large infrastructure projects by multinational companies (such as roads and dams in Gilgit-Baltistan and AJK) and the promotion of large-scale religious and leisure tourism, as described in Chapters 1 and 4.³⁴ Although Balibar's work draws on the historical evolution of the Western European state and focuses on the French republican tradition, the processes he describes share similarities with many postcolonial states. In these states, the issue of belonging revolves around the question of addressing the social plurality of these societies and the construction of a clear-cut national identity. For this reason, I argue that belonging embodies cosmopolitan views.

Balibar distinguishes a form of cosmopolitanism from below in terms of the politics of representation – as transcending or not fitting into the boundaries of the national frame – from a cosmopolitanism from above, for which the existing boundaries are irrelevant. This cosmopolitanism from below, in consideration of communities of migrant origin, is not recognized (or is denounced as racism) while the cosmopolitanism from above is generally celebrated and becomes irrelevant and detached from conflicts and

32 Balibar, 'The "Impossible"', 437.

33 Ibid., 441.

34 Although those living on the Indian side are considered citizens of India, their political rights are very restricted. See Mato Bouzas, 'Securitization and development', 90-95; Reader, *Pilgrimage*, 42. See also Junaid, 'Peace, tourism'.

demands for recognition (economic, and legal recognition) on the ground.³⁵ In fact, Chris Calhoun relates cosmopolitanism from above with an effort to revitalize liberalism.³⁶ In this sense belonging, being neither here nor there, relates in many contexts to a contestation of the immobility, spatial and social, that occurs within borders and shares reminiscences with this cosmopolitanism from below in the fact that is not recognized. Hence, by unveiling alternative experiences of territoriality, the study of belonging opens a way of rethinking understandings of political space and borders. Following the case of the Kashmir dispute, my field research has shown that those living in Baltistan and Ladakh (mainly in the Kargil border area) would wish to re-establish direct ties with each other, not only for economic reasons but also for personal and cultural ones. Unlike the border conflict in AJK and the Kashmir Valley, people living in these border areas were never directly involved in violent activities; and yet they have been prevented from meeting and interacting across the border by their respective states.

The contestation of immobility through claims of belonging can also be found in the Kashmir Valley, although framed in different terms. Respondents in various locations of the Kashmir Valley – including religious leaders, such as the influential *Mirwaiz*³⁷ Umar Farooq – have debated the question of the social heterogeneity of the Kashmir disputed territories and how it can be articulated in a political form. Deciding the future status of the region, they say, is not possible without dialogue between representatives of the various affected groups. As the *Mirwaiz* has pointed out, ‘India and Pakistan have to maintain Jammu and Kashmir as it was in 1947 (the political status) or change it. With respect to the other groups (outside the Kashmir Valley), let them be part of the region, allow them to communicate, let the community talk to each other.’³⁸ Indeed, it is striking that despite the frequent references to the diversity of Kashmir in research and journalistic work, few efforts have been made to add to the little knowledge that the various groups in the region have about one another. There are many international conferences and academic and political events devoted to the Kashmir

35 Although Balibar does not explicitly use the term ‘cosmopolitanism from below’, he is pointing to this idea in the practices of citizenship. In the article ‘Uprisings’, he discusses cosmopolitanism in relation to the national frame (the French state). Kurasawa defines a ‘cosmopolitanism from below’ as a ‘transnational mode of practice’ and he emphasizes public discourse and ‘social and political oriented forms of global social action.’ ‘A Cosmopolitanism from Below’, 234.

36 Calhoun, ‘Class consciousness’.

37 Title of the spiritual leader in the Kashmir Valley who represents the traditional form of Islam in Kashmir, which is connected to the Iranian influences of the first preachers.

38 Interview, Srinagar, 12 July 2012.

issue, but whether those most affected by the conflict can speak to each other remains unaddressed. Notwithstanding the differences, the situation echoes the case described by Balibar regarding those involved in violence in the *banlieues*, in the sense that the plurality existing in the Kashmir disputed territories at the societal level is acknowledged but cannot be politically articulated.

Unlike identity, which underlines differentiation (what is specific to a group), belonging is mainly relational. By articulating senses of belonging beyond the established borders, people separated in border territories propose alternative figurations of space that can be symbolic but also real, in the sense of personal and material exchanges. For example, although people in Baltistan and Ladakh cannot cross the border, divided families meet during religious pilgrimages in third countries such as Iraq, Iran, and Saudi Arabia. There, they exchange news and gifts and pass on presents for other separated families who cannot afford to travel. Moreover, videos, sent directly by post or exchanged physically in these third meeting points, circulate containing family information or recordings of the local landscape. Along with symbolic representations of space, such limited mobilities exemplify the subversion of existing borders in these societies. They show that people in these territories have experiences of seeing themselves as part of a wider world, and therefore these expressions and actions contain a sense of cosmopolitanism from below.³⁹ These limited mobilities contrast with the continued reproduction of knowledge about the border territories (and therefore the border space) as divided along the existing lines. Articulations of belonging therefore contain a reflection on the political space that is worth further investigation.

Politics of belonging and world (b)ordering

In the previous sections I have discussed how the notion of belonging, as differentiated but not entirely separated from identity, problematizes the fixed spatial lens through which various social processes and groups

39 My use of the term 'cosmopolitanism' is not in the strict philosophical sense. Rather, it is employed to highlight the memories (that people still evoke) of these places as crossroads of influences exemplified in the continuing social plurality and experiences of multilingualism. Through the re-enactment of ties across the borders, those involved try to re-appropriate these past legacies based on their condition of being members of the wider world. This understanding does not contradict the political argument that many Kashmiris in the Valley seek to differentiate themselves from India and Pakistan (by creating a border). Many minority groups in the world searching for self-determination have based their claims on universal values of justice and solidarity.

(mostly) in non-advanced capitalist societies are examined. The study of belonging shifts attention to how people living in these territories are bordered – i.e., further divided and fragmented – and how, under specific living conditions, they can articulate views about their own context. This provides an understanding of the collective because it questions how, in broader theoretical debates, concepts such as security, sovereignty, and identity have become detached from the empirical experiences they attempt to explain. Since belonging necessarily embodies a translocal and transnational experience, I argue that it generates specific knowledge about international reality and the way the world is ordered.⁴⁰ In this regard, I understand the politics of belonging as relating to the circumstances under which people and groups claim belonging and non-belonging. The politics of belonging is the lens through which to scrutinize dimensions of international reality – most importantly legal, security, and surveillance issues – that are silenced in broader theoretical debates.

Nira Yuval-Davies describes the politics of belonging as the continuous maintenance and reproduction of boundaries of the community of belonging by the hegemonic political powers, but also admits that it involves their contestation and challenge by various political agents.⁴¹ This latter aspect is the focus of my attention because the politics of belonging is not only about state belonging, implied in one's relation to citizenship, but also a form of contesting existing hegemonies which can draw attention to new or alternative understandings of space, insofar as belonging embodies territoriality.⁴² Yuval-Davies and Anthias underline the intersectional dimension that is implicit in the notion of belonging at the level of social locations, in the sense that claiming belonging is always affected by other cross-cutting categories (class, gender, race, etc.).⁴³ Therefore, claiming belonging is also a process of re-appropriation and placemaking by which reality is transformed at various spatial scales.

This book has discussed the manifestations of conflict in the disputed Kashmir territories between India and Pakistan: the militarization of the Kashmir Valley, tight surveillance and lack of basic freedoms in parts of AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan, etc. The dynamics of conflict in the Kashmir Valley have also tightened the boundaries of the community and, as mentioned before, have made dialogue difficult between and within the various groups.

40 Pffaf-Czarnecka and Toffin, *The Politics of Belonging*, xxii.

41 Yuval-Davies, 'Belonging and the politics', 197–214, 205.

42 Migdal, *Boundaries and Belonging*, 15–16.

43 Yuval-Davies, 'Belonging and the politics'; Anthias, 'Translocational belonging'.

The dispute has been discussed in the media and in some academic works as an identity issue of the 'Kashmiri Muslims' versus the Indian state, in which Kashmiri Muslims (especially Sunnis) from the Valley are singled out as the source of dissent.⁴⁴ Instead of acknowledging that the Kashmir issue extends beyond the Kashmir Valley and the LoC, a number of scholars have framed the problem within the confines of the state by recognizing the failure of the Indian state to address Kashmiri nationalism.⁴⁵ Framed in this way, the representation of the conflict ignores a more complex and interactive understanding of these societies based on everyday experience. Some anthropological works on specific groups in various parts of the disputed territories have highlighted aspects of agency and structure that are neglected in broader political and sociological studies and which show the relational and interactive dimension examined here.⁴⁶ In other words, the conflict in the Kashmir Valley and the political context of those in AJK, Gilgit-Baltistan, and Ladakh are interrelated by the dynamics associated with (that is, the figuration of) the border.

There is little doubt that the conflict that erupted in the Kashmir Valley in 1989 was initiated by organizations whose members were Muslims, and that many people (primarily youths from mostly lower-middle class backgrounds) crossed the LoC to receive training in AJK and other parts of Pakistan and then returned to the Valley to launch attacks against the 'Indian enemy', personified as those with certain posts in the administration, government positions, and those who openly displayed pro-Indian views.⁴⁷ Their aim was to free Kashmir from India, but the climate of chaos also created an opportunity to settle personal accounts and vendettas, leading to a less coherent view of the 'movement'.⁴⁸ In an interview in the Kashmir

44 Wirsing, *Kashmir in the Shadow*, Ch. 3; Behera, *Demystifying Kashmir*, 104-144. Also see the most recent and controversial 'Letter to Kashmiri Youth' by the popular author Chetan Bhagat.

45 Among others: Behera, *State, Identity*; Bose, *Roots of Conflict*, 164-165.

46 For example, Bhan, *Counterinsurgency*; Robinson, *Body of Victim*.

47 I refer here to the religious ascription, not to the degree of religious mobilization. This is based on the fact that, according to the 2011 census of India, Muslims constitute 68.31 percent of the population of the state of Jammu and Kashmir, the majority living in the Kashmir Valley. Moreover, in my interviews with militants and the families of militants (in Srinagar and Baramulla area), I noted that all of them were brought up in Muslim cultural traditions. A Sikh interviewee from Srinagar mentioned that Sikhs have been involved in militancy in the southern part of the Valley, but I never met a Sikh (former) militant. In my interviews I never asked specifically for religious beliefs; I asked about the youths' motivations to cross the LoC and engage in violent activities. Religious reasons were never mentioned in response to this question. Widmalm, *Kashmir in Comparative*, 131-132; Bose, *Roots of Conflict*, 95-96.

48 I employ this term to refer to the political and armed popular movement in the Kashmir Valley, as this was normally used by my interviewees.

Valley with a middle-aged woman who was active in support of the armed struggle by providing logistical support to the militants, she narrated the early 1990s rape and killing of a young female journalist of Kashmir state TV by a well-known militant of Hizbul Mujahideen. She mentioned his name while showing me the photograph of the dead woman. After a moment of silence, which I interpreted as reflection, she finally said: 'These things also happened. It is true. There was chaos and people used the opportunity to do other things.'⁴⁹ Within the general climate of violence, Kashmiri Pandits became a particular target because they were the educated class, had better positions in the administration, and were seen as more sympathetic to India. Between 80 and 90 percent of Pandits abandoned the Valley in the early 1990s, many because of fear and threats, but the circumstances surrounding this exodus or 'migration', as it is usually referred to, are still the subject of much debate by scholars working on Kashmir, as it is linked with the identitarian character of the conflict.⁵⁰

Former militants – members of JKLf and Hizbul Muhajideen – and the families of dead militants whom I interviewed narrated their activism (and that of their sons and brothers) using political arguments. They explained their discontent with the political system at the time – specifically mentioning corruption and the rigging of the elections – and the illegitimacy of 'Indian rule', since people did not get the opportunity to decide in a plebiscite to be part of India, as required by the UN resolutions. This notwithstanding, in some cases an individual's involvement in militancy was through networks of friends and neighbours without any apparent significant political mobilization ('he joined because the others did'). During these interviews, there was never any specific form of hatred directed toward any other religious group in the Valley. However, in meetings in Srinagar with more educated and politically mobilized men – university professors, members of NGOs, US migrant returnees, lawyers, and nationalist politicians – the situation of the Pandits was referred to with a sense of embarrassment and guilt but also explained within the broader context of general violence, in which people had to fend for themselves. It was not Muslims targeting Hindus, but also targeting other Muslims. In this respect, the respondents emphasized the political question instead of ethnic or religious ascriptions. In fact, as a reaction to my questions about the Pandits, a few of them replied that the Sikhs from the Valley and other Hindus did stay during the

49 Interview, Srinagar, 15 May 2010.

50 For a recent published anthropological work on the displaced Pandit communities in Jammu see Datta, *Uncertain Ground*, 52–67.

conflict. A tentative explanation for this could be that the Pandits enjoyed more prominent positions in the public sector than did the Sikhs and other minorities. In interviews in Srinagar, three Sikh men in their mid-fifties acknowledged having been threatened by Muslims during the conflict, but in one case this was more a kind of extortion due to the fact, he explained, that his business (the distribution of gas cylinders) was doing very well at the time. All three of them, whose families had been settled in the Valley for more than a hundred years, identified as Kashmiris.

These views emphasize the relative importance of the political issue compared to identity arguments, but also provide a reflection on the political context which, because of the conflict, is difficult to investigate. Following these accounts, those who revolted in the Valley did so because they felt excluded from the state system – due to a manipulated electoral system and atrophied administration – in which a class element was also present, but also because they shared ideas and meanings about their own place, the Valley, that were framed as part of a historical democratic struggle that questioned the boundaries of the Indian state's rule over them. The politics of belonging in the Kashmir Valley can not be understood by only analysing relations between religious and cultural groups. The broader figuration of boundary drawing and maintenance by the Indian and Pakistani post-colonial states must also be considered, including the impacts on people's lives, and the inability of those states to mould the social diversity of the area into a political subjecthood.

The research findings from the various locations of the Kashmir borderland also show evidence of the incapacity of the interviewees to refer to or speak for a community of people or a specific territory and their difficulty in politically articulating their views. Even in the Kashmir Valley, where the idea of forming an independent state or merging the region with Pakistan is openly defended by various organizations, respondents were not able to express what kind of polity they envisioned and which territories would be part of it – except for those who favoured Kashmir remaining in India. Most of the answers about the future of the region were about the need to decide (acknowledged in UN resolutions), since Kashmir is disputed. Yet, interviewees in the Kashmir Valley were confused about whether their need to decide should also encompass the Pakistani territories, Ladakh, and Jammu, and most were worried about their own living conditions, which had been marked by a long period of violence and militarization.

The figuration formed by the LoC is characterized by the ambivalent position of the various actors and groups as citizens of India and Pakistan and their attempts to articulate claims to places as modes of overcoming

their present situation within the restricted political context. The emergence of alternative forms of identification – apart from the more articulated nationalism in the Kashmir Valley with its openly anti-Indian stance – is the result of claims to be or become something that transcends the existing borders within the narrow political space. This is the case in the revival of Tibetan culture in Baltistan and probably, though less examined in my fieldwork, the transborder identification of Pahari-speaking groups in AJK. In this sense, the politics of belonging concerns the study of these articulations, their motivations, the moment and context in which they appear and gain significance, and their aims.

The study of the politics of belonging also implies reflecting on the political space, which connects to debates about the changing state space and sovereignty at a more abstract level. This has been mainly examined concerning the case of migrants and diasporic groups in West European and North American contexts, during debates on multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism, but there has been little reflection in other contexts.⁵¹ Within the umbrella question posed by inquiries of belonging – how can we live together? – it is also necessary to ask under which conditions we can live together.

Again Balibar's works on the relationship of borders and citizenship provide interesting insights.⁵² He observes territorialization and deterritorialization processes that involve the changing nature of state, with a particular focus on the European experience, and notes that, while the state form is no longer, if it ever was, able to respond to the challenges emanating from above (globalization processes) and from below (redistributive policies and social inequalities), there is still a continuous reproduction of the state form. Balibar takes the particular case of the European Union as a supra-state entity and seeks to answer the question of how and under which conditions people can live together in this borderland territory. In fact, it is this model of a borderland that he proposes as a way to acknowledge the existing internal diversity in a political space 'imagined in terms of overlapping open regions.'⁵³ The borderland model strongly resonates with the understanding of belonging, and the politics of belonging in particular, examined in this book. In this understanding, belonging, as expressed in the

51 See Calhoun's reflection on cosmopolitanism as 'a discourse centered in a Western view of the world' while the non-West is constantly approached through *tradition*. 'Class consciousness', 873-874.

52 Balibar, 'Europe as borderland', and also from the same author, 'The "Impossible"'.

53 Balibar, 'Europe as borderland', 210.

Kashmir border territories, is about the ambivalence of neither being 'in' nor 'out' (for example, being legally part of the dispute and not feeling part of it) and characterizes a state somewhere between non-being (as not-belonging or the denial to belong) and being a multiplicity of things (depending on the circumstances). In this regard, the Kashmir borderland already exists, as do other borderlands in the world, and the politics of belonging is the channel through which it becomes recognizable.

The notion of belonging, understood as the relationship of 'being' and attachment to a 'place' and exemplified in Ahmed's narration, is a useful analytical tool for examining issues of displacement and recognition of groups caught in disputed borders because it raises questions about the ways these groups are bordered as part of a wider structure. Belonging shares an intimate relationship with identity but questions the latter's intensity (or cohesion), since articulations of belonging emphasize social and territorial interactions irrespective of existing borders. These articulations embody a translocal and transnational experience, thus demonstrating cosmopolitan views, and draw attention to the context and circumstances in which they operate. Moreover, the exploration of issues of belonging represents an epistemological alternative when it is not possible to ask about aspects of identity, or when these are the source of great contestation. In this regard, claiming belonging implies a search for recognition that contests the existing political space and its territorial dimension.

The analysis of the politics of belonging – exemplified in the Kashmir dispute and the claims of various groups to relate to other places irrespective of the border – makes a hybrid form of territoriality re-emerge, in what Balibar aptly describes as the borderland. Borderlands such as Kashmir already exist in other parts of the world and the politics of belonging refers to struggles about their political articulation. To understand the Kashmir conflict from the borderland, as shown throughout this book, implies taking people's views into account, partly to challenge larger narratives of the dispute in relation to their manifestations in place, and partly to grasp the opportunities for thinking of more inclusive spaces.

Acronyms

Frequently used acronyms only

AFSPA	Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (Jammu and Kashmir),1990
AJK	Azad Jammu and Kashmir
APDP	Association of Parents of Disappeared People
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
BSF	Border Security Force
CBMs	Confidence-Building Measures
CRPF	Central Reserve Police Force
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
FCR	Frontiers Crime Regulation
INC	Indian National Congress
JKLF	Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front
KKH	Karakoram Highway
KPK	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
LoC	Line of Control
NC	National Conference
NOC	Non-Objection Certificate
PDP	People's Democratic Party
SASB	Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board
UN	United Nations
UNMOGIP	United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan

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